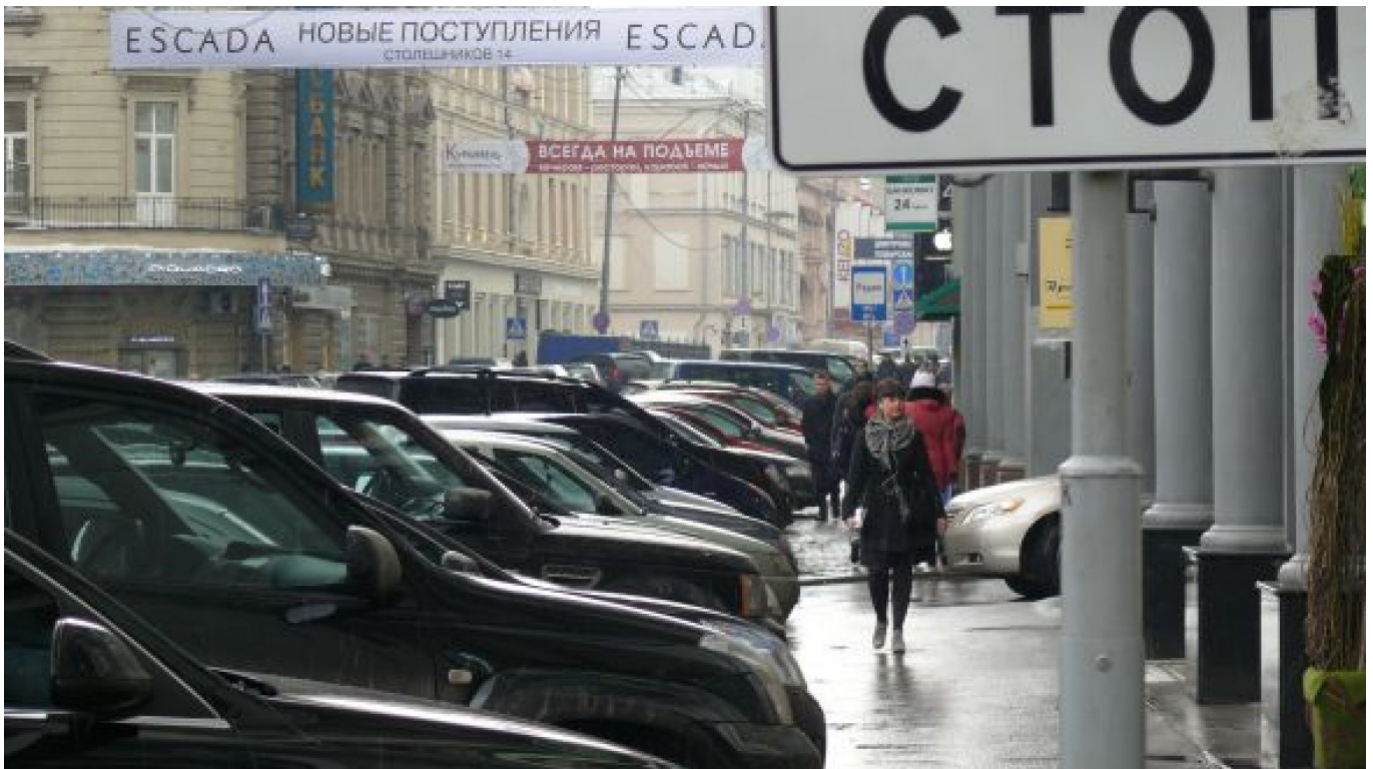


Moscow to Fight Traffic Jams With Parking Fees

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Sergei Porter

Drivers who park in downtown Moscow will be charged 50 rubles an hour from Jan. 1 as part of an attempt to ease the capital's notorious traffic jams, City Hall said Wednesday.

The fees will be levied on public parking spaces within the Boulevard Ring, a loop formed by Tverskoi Bulvar, Chistoprudny Bulvar, Gogolevsky Bulvar and other boulevards in the very heart of Moscow.

"Payments will be collected at specially designated and marked parking spaces from Jan. 1, 2013," Maxim Liksutov, City Hall's top transportation official, told reporters. "This is the decision that has been made."

Public parking is currently free in the city center, a decision that Moscow authorities made several years ago amid complaints about a "parking mafia" taking advantage of drivers. Private parking lots in the city center currently charge 50 to 100 rubles per hour, RIA-Novosti reported.

When City Hall rolls out paid parking, preference will be given to people who live in the city center, although not all will secure spaces, Liksutov said. He said the city lacks sufficient parking spaces for the 200,000 apartments located within the Boulevard Ring.

Mayor Sergei Sobyenin, who took office in 2010 with a pledge to fight traffic jams, announced in early March that paid parking would be introduced on a trial basis in some downtown areas this year. He complained at the time that chaotically parked cars were impeding traffic flows.

Liksutov said Wednesday that a pilot project to collect parking fees would go into force on Oct. 1 on Ulitsa Karetny Ryad and Petrovskaya and Teatralnaya squares. Ulitsa Karetny Ryad has public parking spaces for 1,100 cars and, "of these, 35 percent are now parked illegally," he said.

City Hall plans to photograph the license plates of illegally parked vehicles and send parking tickets to car owners by mail, Liksutov said, Interfax reported. He said traffic police have handed out 12,000 tickets of 300 rubles each to illegally parked drivers since the start of the year. That totals 3.6 million rubles (\$120,000) in fines.

Moscow is the fourth-most difficult city in the world to park, according to the [IBM Global Parking Survey](#) released in September. The only cities worse than Moscow are New Delhi, followed by Bangalore and Beijing.

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