

Putin Rebukes Government and Russian Regions Get Rail Service Back

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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State monopoly Russian Railways said Thursday that it would reinstate 300 suburban train routes after cancellation of the vital services drew a sharp rebuke from President Vladimir Putin.

About 40 routes have already been returned to train schedules, the company said in a statement.

The cancellation of hundreds of suburban passenger trains across more than 20 Russian regions sparked outrage across the country in recent months and on Wednesday drew a stinging response from Putin.

"What, have you all gone mad?" Putin told government officials. "We understand how serious this is. It's not just one bus route that's been canceled. Suburban trains have stopped running in the regions!"

Putin directly castigated Arkady Dvorkovich, the deputy prime minister who oversees the sector. Dvorkovich said on Thursday that 41 suburban train routes had been restored in the Pskov, Tver, Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk and Moscow regions, news agency Interfax reported.

The trains, which are largely loss-making but an essential feature of many Russians' lives, have in recent years been caught in a fierce tug-of-war between Russian Railways and the regional governments.

The debt-ridden regions are increasingly hard put to pay the difference between the market value of the services — which is defined by Russian Railways — and the amount that residents can realistically pay for tickets.

Meanwhile, Russian Railways has put all the blame on the regional governments for failing to pay what it considers its due. The rail monopoly's announcement Thursday did not clarify how the resumed routes would be paid for.

"It is a war between a state monopoly and the regions," Natalya Zubarevich, director of the regional program of the Independent Institute for Social Policy in Moscow, told The Moscow Times previously.

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