

BUY
PHOTO
REPRINTS
ONLINE



SERVICES DIRECTORY
HOLISTIC NEWS AND REVIEWS
COMMUNITY CALENDAR
ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFIEDS

SUBSCRIBE TO
THE GAZETTE
ONLINE
OR IN PRINT

GAZETTENET.com

Amherst Bulletin

The Recorder

Valley Advocate

Pioneer Valley

Many Hands

Hampshire Life

Sign out

Account

Trouble finding something?

Contact us

Classifieds

Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

news search

Local News State/Region U.S./World Obituaries Sports Business Schools Colleges Politics Opinion Entertainment Health Living Sci/Tech

Love of trucks, SUVs fleeing

By CATHERINE BAUM
Staff Writer

Email this page Printer-friendly version

Monday, July 28, 2008

Fourth in a series

Sports utility vehicles and pickup trucks used to be hot - they're big, they're strong and they can tow boats and campers. Now, with gasoline costs at about \$4 a gallon, these low-mileage vehicles are one of the most unattractive items on a new or used car lot.

"They're very, very thirsty vehicles," Dana Goodfield, president of the Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association, said of large-size SUVs like Tahoes and Suburbans, which run at about 12 miles per gallon around town. "It takes a lot of energy to move those kinds of vehicles."

Sales of large-size SUVs reached their peak in the late 1990s, but have dropped within the last couple of months to the point that some dealerships don't even have them in stock.

Goodfield, who owns Dana Automotive on Bridge Road in Northampton, said he sold his last large-size SUV in June.

The sharpest decrease in SUV sales started about two months ago, when "the price of fuel went crazy," he said.

From January 2008 to April 2008, SUV sales dropped 27.9 percent, while entry/mid-size pickup truck sales dropped 14.4 percent and full-size pickup truck sales dropped 17.2 percent, according to Global Insight, a leading research company that covers a number of industries.

"SUV sales are declining in every size and segment," said George Magliano, director of auto industry research for Global Insight. "Fashion buyers are leaving in droves."

Aimee Teixeira, a native of Belchertown, bought her mid-size SUV, a 2005 Nissan Xterra, in January 2006. She said she purchased the four-wheel drive vehicle for security while driving during the winter months, and for space for traveling with her yellow Labrador retriever in the summer months. The Xterra, which gets about 16 mpg, took less than \$50 to fill its gas tank in 2006, and is now \$80.

'Can't afford it anymore'

"I loved driving it. ... I just can't afford it anymore," said Teixeira, who advertised to sell the Xterra and, as of last week, hadn't received any calls about it (except for a reporter's call for this article).

There are hundreds of SUVs and pickup trucks for sale on Internet sites. One Web-based ad for a 1997 Mercury Mountaineer that gets 12.5 miles per gallon was titled, "Please somebody, buy my gas hog SUV!" The advertiser posted an offer for \$995, noting the model's blue book value is \$3,500 to \$4,000.

"The price of a used vehicle is totally driven by the market," Goodfield said. "When the market has

1



GORDON DANIELS

James Batchelder, of Chesterfield, pumps diesel fuel into his Dodge Ram pickup.



Popular stories

- Obama chooses chief of staff; Kerry as Secretary of State?
- Tune-up gives UMass basketball fans first look
- Two hurt, one charged in crash
- Area Police News
- State tax change defeated; marijuana, dog racing measures pass

Gazette Newspaper Ads

View all ads gallery



Click to enlarge

kijiji www.kijiji.com

USA's FREE Local Classifieds Site

NYC
Boston
Bay Area

Atlanta
Chicago
Detroit

Seattle
Miami
And more..

Always Free

Visit your Kijiji City

dropped as it has for SUVs and trucks, the bottom falls right out of it."

Meanwhile, Teixeira, who now lives in Chatham, drives to visit her family a few times a month in Belchertown, where the Xterra is stored. Her job as a physical therapist entails visits to clients in their homes, requiring her to fill her gas tank twice a week. These days, Teixeira is driving a friend's Honda Accord, which costs half the amount as her Xterra to fill the tank.

Besides advertising, another option people take is to trade in their SUVs or pickup trucks. Of course, the popularity of a vehicle is directly related to its value, and during times of high gas prices, guzzlers don't fetch as much.

A 2007 Cadillac Escalade with wood trim interior, leather and plush seating was originally purchased for \$60,000, but was traded in for \$30,000 at a recent auction that Goodfield attended.

"If I took the vehicle in for \$30,000, I don't really know what I'd do with it because there's not a lot of people out there, anywhere, that would buy it," Goodfield said. "People are totally shocked by what the value of the vehicle is. It's way, way down, and the problem is there's no place to go with it."

Crossovers

Meanwhile, gaining popularity are crossover utility vehicles, which have SUV or minivan features. These vehicles, known as CUVs, have higher gas mileage than SUVs, like the 2008 Chevrolet Equinox, which gets 25 mpg and costs about \$30,000. From January to April, the CUV sales increased 7.9 percent. What's more, large-size crossover sales are up more than 100 percent from last year, Magliano said.

Connie Dragon, of Westhampton, drove her new CUV, a Honda CR-V, to the library, grocery store and bank while running errands recently in Easthampton. During a short interview in the parking lot of Pride gas station on Union Street, she said she bought the CUV, which gets 28 to 30 mpg, because it gets higher gas mileage than her 2007 Chevy Silverado. The truck gets about 18 to 20 mpg, she said, and is used sparingly, like when her husband needs it to tow their boat to take their grandson fishing.

As advertised on the radio, television and in newspapers, dealerships are offering incentive programs to help sell pick-up trucks and SUVs.

At Northampton Dodge, selected vehicles come with a gasoline card from Chrysler Corp. that guarantees the customer only pays \$2.99 a gallon for up to 12,000 miles a year for three years. Other dealers are offering similar gas cards.

The customer uses a credit card to pay the price listed at the pump, and car manufacturer reimburses the difference on that credit card.

Ninety-seven percent of gas stations participate in this program, said Aubrey Rippy, general manager of Northampton Dodge. But even with gas rebate programs, sales haven't increased.

"It helped us maintain our sales level," Rippy said, as he pointed to empty spots in his lot on South Street in Northampton. "We're still selling."

Catherine Baum can be reached at cbaum@gazettenet.com.

Filed Under: [local](#) [northampton](#) [running on empty](#)

Comments

Post new comment

Your name:
[Catherine Baum](#)

Subject:

Comment: *

Input format

Filtered HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Allowed HTML tags: <a> <i> <code> <cite> <div>
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

Full HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

More information about formatting options

