



# Used vehicles grow in popularity as alternative to buying new

BY BENJAMIN PEEK  
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Used vehicles have become an increasingly popular choice for local consumers.

"I think the reason why people purchase pre-owned vehicles is purely a dollar thing," said George Jorkasky, pre-owned vehicle manager for Dan McCormick Ford Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep of Kalkaska.

Despite the slow economy and stiff competition from zero percent financing for brand new cars, used car sales have continued to ramp up.

"New car prices are expensive, said Jeff Wecker, used car manager at Traverse

Motors in Traverse City.

"It's an affordability issue, really," said Tom Gordon, used car manager at Williams Chevrolet and Honda in Traverse City. "In northern Michigan, the median income is lower than elsewhere in the state, people can't afford huge car payments."

With many used vehicles coming off of leases that end after two or three years, the average age of used cars has become much lower than in the past. That has produced more favorable loan terms for consumers buying these hardy used vehicles.

Wecker suggested that such favorable loans are an important reason why more people have started to buy used vehicles.

Many in the used car industry believe certified vehicles, which typically cost \$80 to \$100 less than new cars, to be the future of used car sales. The concept of certifying vehicles for resale was developed in the mid-1990s as a way of boosting sales of former lease vehicles, which were building up in used car lots.

To be certified, a vehicle must pass a thorough multiple-point inspection by a qualified technician in a certified dealership.

"The manufacturers will stand behind their product if it makes their criteria," said Jorkasky. "Certifying a vehicle leaves some sort of peace in the customer's mind."

And today's newer cars are

likely to pass the inspection to become certified.

"We have the ability, with our technology, to do a huge inspection on vehicles, and we are finding less wrong with them anymore ... both foreign and domestic," said Dan O'Connor, sales manager for Price Point Used Car Super Center in Traverse City.

In fact, such improvements in quality have been a significant factor in the increase in used car sales.

Meanwhile, consumers have gotten more savvy about researching their purchases in advance.

"The feeling is, the American public is becoming smarter about purchasing used vehicles due largely to the Internet," Jorkasky

said.

In fact, 43 percent of potential used car buyers utilize the Internet in their decision-making process. The Internet provides a vast pool of information for consumers, including tools to determine a vehicle's present value, detailed model specifications and information about a used car's previous history, which may be obtained at Web sites such as [www.carfax.com](http://www.carfax.com).

"I think what used cars do, is allow people to afford more car," said O'Connor, "more equipment, more content, a larger vehicle, with more utility and get more bang for the buck."



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