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Owners keep vehicles around longer

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By **Ashley Dieterle**

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In the past, when a transmission repair was needed, the thought of paying over \$2,000 on a repair was not appealing to drivers.



Charlie, a transmission repair technician works under the hood removing parts on a vehicle at Mr. Transmission in Parker. Photo by Ashley Dieterle

But now with the economy, \$2000 is better than paying for a new car. Although a typical transmission repair is a pretty penny, a few transmission repair shops in Parker have benefited from the drop in the economy.

New owner of Mr. Transmission in Parker Robert Drucker said he has seen an increase recently in the transmission repair business. Drucker took over the business on Aug. 1. One of the reasons he chose this particular business is because more and more people are taking their transmission issues to the shop rather than buying new cars all together he said.

"People can either spend around \$2000 on a transmission repair or \$15,000 on a new car," he said. "And many people can't afford a new car at this time."

Owner of Affordable Transmission Centers Mark Collins has been in the transmission business for about ten years. He said five years ago, his the transmission repair business was booming. But in the past couple years more people began trading in their vehicles when a transmission repair was needed.

"A couple years ago the car loans were a lot more liberal so people didn't put money into repairs they just got a new vehicle," he said.

But in the past year, Collins said business has been up and down. He said more people are repairing their vehicles in an effort to hold onto their money.

"There are a lot of people fixing their cars when before they would trade them in," he said. "Many people just don't have the option to get a new car like they used to."

Both Drucker and Collins agree that due to the economy, at times payments made on transmission repairs are more difficult for some customers. Drucker said he recognizes that some people are struggling financially, so his business is willing to work with the customers.

"I understand what is going on in the economy and I am effected by it myself," he said. "So we try to accommodate as a service to the community by working with those who can't pay full price."

But Collins' business has felt the repercussions of working with customers. He said at one point his business would work with customers working out payment deals, but after some customers were not paying at all, that option stopped.

"In some aspects the repairs have been good for us, because people are keeping their cars longer," Collins said. "But in other cases some people just don't have the money to get their car fixed and they end up driving it until it's dead."

From a larger business' perspective, owner of AAMCO Transmissions in Parker Carl Hoover said currently the most important thing on people's minds is a good warranty after the repair. AAMCO Transmissions is the world's largest transmission specialty business and because of their reputation, people expect good warranties, Hoover said.

"People are keeping their cars longer and what they really want is at least a three-year to life warranty," he said. "People don't want to pay for it once but they have to, and they really don't want to pay for it twice."

Some shops will allow for free inspections on cars when a driver suspects a problem, which can also help save money. At Mr. Transmission the initial inspection helps technicians narrow down the problem.

"Not all repairs are really expensive," Drucker said. "Some may only cost \$200, but its nice for the customer to get that figured out for free during the inspection."

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