

# Repair or Replace?

## Should I repair my old vehicle or purchase a new one?

'Is my vehicle worth fixing?' This is a question I hear on an almost daily basis here at the shop. My answer depends on criteria as follows. I will go in depth on each after this list.

1. What is the physical condition of the vehicle?
2. If we repair the vehicle, will it be safe on the road, or are there other concerns?
3. How does the customer intend on using the vehicle?
4. Does the cost of repairs exceed the value of the vehicle?
5. Are there any indications that there is an imminent failure on the horizon?

For our first question 'What is the physical condition of the vehicle?' We have to assess the overall condition as it pertains to structure. We examine things like the frame area, if the vehicle has a proper frame, floor boards, engine cradle (again if equipped). If the structure of the vehicle is compromised that will really decrease the safety measures designed into the vehicle, such as crumple zones and cab supports. If these are not in a serviceable state it puts the people riding in the vehicle in significantly more danger in the event of a collision.

Our second question asks 'If we repair the vehicle, will it be safe on the road, or are there other concerns?' Part of this question goes back to our first question, naturally, however in this case we are looking more at things like brake condition, suspension and steering components, etc. Basically anything that will make the vehicle not stop or steer correctly under normal and emergency conditions. We truly care about our customers and if these systems are not in good condition it puts them in danger, it puts their family in danger and it puts the general public in danger. If they are not able to be repaired, then we would have to say that the vehicle in question should not be repaired.

The third question wonders 'How does the customer intend on using the vehicle?' None of my darn business that's how! Except that isn't exactly true in this case. Don't get me wrong, if you plan on going extreme mud bogging in your Ford Escape that is none of my concern. But we do need to know the intent of use if we are going to be able to give an honest answer to the primary question here, which was if the vehicle is worth repairing in the first place.

Question for finds us asking 'Does the cost of repairs exceed the value of the vehicle?' Notice I didn't say the retail or sell value of the vehicle? Value can be defined any number of ways when it comes to a vehicle. For example, if you were to tell me that 'I can't afford to purchase a new vehicle right now' I would say that even if the repair may exceed the retail value of the vehicle, to this customer that doesn't matter as much. There is a caveat to that however, which is, as long as you can drive the money out of the vehicle. What the heck does that mean? To put simply, if you have a \$2000.00 repair preformed on a vehicle, would that be worth doing if you can drive that vehicle for another 2 years? How about 1 year? Again that is a difficult question to answer, with many variables, every person will answer differently. If it were me being asked, I would say that if I can get another 2 years I would absolutely perform the repair. Ok, that was an easy one, how about 1 year? I would still most likely perform the repair. Fine then, how about 6 months? Well, for me at least, this is where it gets a bit iffy.

Our last question asks 'Are there any indications that there is an imminent failure on the horizon?' This is also a bit of a tricky question. We aren't fortune tellers and we have no crystal ball here. Of course this also goes back to previous questions of general road worthiness and safety. Remember that our first priority is customer safety, we want customers for life, hopefully a long and productive relationship for both parties. When we answer this question we are looking 6 months down the road or more. If the brake lines are rusty but not anywhere near starting to leak that's great! How do we think they will be looking after another winter in Michigan? The same goes for structure parts of the vehicle, they might be ok for now, but how about in another year?

As you can see, this isn't such a simple question to answer. Sure there are cases where the answer is very obvious, if not to the customer than to us at the shop. That said it isn't uncommon for a customer to override our advice and proceed with a repair anyway. Keep in mind we will not perform a repair if the vehicle will still be dangerous after our repairs are complete. We have had to do this a few times, and it is never easy or comfortable, but necessary. We all share the road and I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if I didn't do what I could to make it a bit safer for everyone.

It is our hope that this small article will help understand our process when you ask if your vehicle is worth repairing. Our next entry will talk about what happens when you decide to purchase another vehicle. Specifically, 'should I buy new or used?'