Consumer Demand for Better MPGs Increased in April According to AutoTrader.com's Trend Engine Report

ATLANTA, May 16, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- As the average price for a gallon of gas began hitting the $4.00 mark across the nation, consumers continued shifting their focus toward fuel-efficient cars, according to AutoTrader.com's monthly Trend Engine report, which provides analysis of consumer shopping behavior on the site. This increase in interest is especially apparent on the most-searched new vehicles list, where two fuel-efficient cars—the Ford Focus and Hyundai Sonata—made big jumps to land in the top 20 and showed notable increases in average asking price.

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Across the board, the majority of trucks and SUVs experienced declines, showing that Americans' love affair with larger vehicles takes a hiatus when gas prices spike. According to a survey conducted by AutoTrader.com in March and April, 62% of car shoppers are considering purchasing a vehicle that is more fuel efficient than the car they currently drive.

Interest in Fuel-Efficient Cars Increases

On the list of most-searched new vehicles, trucks and SUVs continued to lose ground in April, with the majority slipping one to two places on the list. Fuel-efficient cars, however, fared much better, with three holding onto their position month-over-month and four making gains. Among this group were two newcomers to the list in April: the new Ford Focus leapt 21 spots, going from No. 33 in March to No. 11 in April, and the new Hyundai Sonata moved up four spots from No. 23 in March to No. 19 in April. Also notable is the new Chevrolet Cruze, which cracked the top 10 to come in at No. 8 on the list, up from No. 11 in March. Analysts also noted big year-over-year gains for two other fuel-efficient cars: the new Hyundai Elantra leapt 37 places, going from No. 51 to No. 14, and the new Kia Optima leapt 87 spots, going from No. 104 to No. 17.

Likewise, trucks and SUVs also showed signs of declining consumer interest on the list of most-searched used vehicles. The used Ford F-150, which has retained the top spot throughout 2011, was pushed to the No. 2 spot on the list by the used BMW 3-Series. While some trucks and SUVs managed to hold on to their position month-over-month, two other large trucks and SUVs lost ground: the used Chevrolet Tahoe and used Chevrolet Silverado 2500 dropped two or more places between March and April 2011.

Fuel-efficient favorites, such as the used Honda Civic (No. 5) and Accord (No. 6), as well as the used Nissan Altima (No. 12), all held steady month-over-month, while the used Volkswagen Jetta and used Toyota Camry both increased their positions on the list. The Jetta went from No. 15 in March to No. 13 in April, and the Camry moved up one spot from No. 20 in March to No. 19 in April.

The list of most-searched Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) vehicles showed a very similar story. Fuel-efficient cars such as the CPO Honda Civic (No. 5), CPO Volkswagen Jetta (No. 9) and CPO Nissan Altima (No. 19) all moved up one spot month-over-month, signaling more interest in these vehicles among CPO buyers. Numerous trucks and SUVs declined in position month-over-month: the CPO Toyota Tundra went from No. 5 in March to No. 7 in April; the CPO Ford F-150 went from No. 9 in March to No. 12 in April; the CPO Chevrolet Tahoe went from No. 12 in March to No. 14 in April; the CPO Acura MDX went from No. 16 in March to No. 17 in April; and the CPO Toyota 4-Runner went from No. 19 in March to No. 20 in April.

The CPO BMW 3-Series again captured the No. 1 spot, a place it has enjoyed throughout 2011. Two other sportier coupes/sedans made positive moves on the list, with the CPO Audi A4 leaping three spots to the No. 4 position and the CPO Acura TL moving up three spots to the No. 11 position.

Prices Affected by Demand for Fuel Efficiency and Potential Model Shortages

Average asking prices were on the rise for the majority of the most-searched vehicles on AutoTrader.com in April. For new vehicles, prices were up year-over-year on 12 vehicles and down on six vehicles. Two models were not available at this time last year and therefore do not have year-over-year price data. On the used vehicle list, prices were up on 13 and down on seven, and for the most-searched CPO vehicles, prices were up on a whopping 17 vehicles and down on only three.

AutoTrader.com analysts noted that supply and demand is a key factor in determining the asking price of a vehicle, so seeing increases on the majority of vehicles across the new, used and CPO lists shows that consumers are certainly making a return to the automotive market. Analysts also noted that fuel-efficient cars made significant gains across all three lists, as the demand for these cars has increased with the rise in gas prices.

On the list of most-searched new vehicles, the new Kia Optima had the largest increase in average asking price year-over-year, going from $20,772 to $24,099 year-over-year; the new Hyundai Elantra achieved the second-biggest price increase of 12.75%, going from $17,474 to $19,702 year-over-year. The average asking price for the new Ford Focus rose 6.92%, and the new Hyundai Sonata saw an increase of 5.52%.

Fuel-efficient cars fared equally as well on the list of most-searched used cars, with the used Honda Accord posting the largest increase in average asking price—9.89%—going from $15,787 to $17,349 year-over-year, and the used Toyota Camry came in second with an increase of 8.99%, going from $15,482 to $16,874 year-over-year. The used Nissan Altima gained 7.15% in average asking price, and the used Honda Civic gained 6.22%.

On the CPO list, the fuel-efficient Honda Accord gained the most in average asking price at 11%. But another interesting trend noted by analysts was that vehicles made by Toyota or Honda—both manufacturers affected by the natural disasters in Japan—experienced an increase in average asking price in April. Analysts indicated that these increases may be propelled by the anticipated shortages for new models later this year, leading consumers to consider late-model alternatives such as CPO versions of their favorite cars. In the top 20 most-searched CPO vehicles, Hondas saw an average increase in asking price of 5.5% while Toyotas saw an average increase in asking price of 8.6%.

Mixed Bag for the Big Movers in April

In addition to examining the top 20 most-searched new, used and CPO vehicles, AutoTrader.com analysts are now also taking a look at the 10 biggest movers on the site, which are vehicles that have made significant jumps in their rank on the site month-over-month, even if the vehicles didn't receive enough interest to garner a spot in one of the top 20 most-searched lists. Therefore, three new Top 10 Big Movers lists have been added to the monthly Trend Engine report.

On the new vehicle front, the top three big movers were all new models for the 2011 year. The new Fiat 500 made another big month-over-month leap, moving up 122 places between March and April. Between February and March, the Fiat 500 jumped 137 spots, so it continues to garner significant interest from car shoppers and could soon break into the top 100. Rounding out the top three on the new vehicle big movers list was the Chrysler 300, which landed at the No. 41 spot after a leap of 44 places and the all-electric Nissan Leaf, which moved up 40 places month-over-month. Although it didn't make it into the top three big movers, the Infiniti M35 Hybrid moved up 38 spots month-over-month to land in the respectable fourth place.

For used vehicles, the big movers between March and April tended to be sporty and luxury vehicles, with the exception of the Dodge Sprinter commercial van, which moved up 20 places month-over-month. The CPO list included more practical vehicles, with

cars such as the Mazda Mazda2 moving up 39 spots, the Mini Cooper Clubman moving up 38 spots and the Buick Regal moving up 35 spots.

Most-Searched Brands on AutoTrader.com

Ford continued its dominance of the most-searched new and used vehicle brands lists, with Chevrolet holding firmly onto the No. 2 position on both lists. Volkswagen returned to the list of most-searched new vehicle brands, coming in at No. 9. Dodge and Jeep both made year-over-year improvements, with Dodge coming in at No. 3 and Jeep securing the No. 8 spot. With only slight position changes here and there, the list of most-searched used vehicle brands remained the same as the previous month.

Top 10 Articles on AutoTrader.com in March

AutoTrader.com publishes insightful and informative articles about automobiles and car shopping, including how-to tips, car reviews and automotive trend stories. In April, one-of-a-kind cars and AutoTrader.com's informative video reviews piqued consumers' interest.

The most-viewed articles on AutoTrader.com in April were:

1. For Sale on AutoTrader: Fast and Furious Movie Cars – Consumers looking to own a piece of movie history can check out five "Fast and Furious" movie cars available for sale on AutoTrader.com.
2. For Sale on AutoTrader: Shaq's Customized Caddy – From custom stereo equipment to a Bulgari clock, Shaq invested heavily in customizing his Cadillac Escalade, now available for sale on AutoTrader.com.
3. 2002-2006 Nissan Altima - Used Car Video Review – The Nissan Altima has been a favorite among car shoppers looking for a sportier yet still fuel-efficient alternative to the traditional family car.
4. 2007-2010 Toyota Tundra - Used Car Video Review – Redesigned in 2007, the Toyota Tundra stepped up its game and became stiffer competition for similarly sized trucks.
5. For Sale on AutoTrader: Ken Griffey, Jr.'s Chevy Suburban and Ferrari 360 Spider – Two cars owned by a baseball star are available for sale on the site.
6. 2012 Volkswagen Golf R First Drive: VW's Hottest Hatch Yet – The VW Golf gets aggressive in its most recent iteration, with a "bite to match its bark" according to an AutoTrader.com reviewer.
7. For Sale on AutoTrader: Rolls-Royce from Kia Soul Commercial – This Silver Spur, with an asking price of $18,500, played a supporting role in one of Kia's "new way to roll" Soul commercials.
8. LoJack Reports Most Stolen Vehicles – A maker of theft recovery products recently released data on the most stolen cars, with older Hondas topping the list.
9. Best Deals on the Most Researched New Cars on AutoTrader.com – AutoTrader.com auto writers highlighted lease and purchase promotions on 10 popular models.
10. 2007-2010 Toyota Camry - Used Car Video Review – Affordable, practical and fuel-efficient are all characteristics that keep the Toyota Camry top of mind for many car shoppers.

These articles and more, including coverage of upcoming auto shows and events, can be found at www.autotrader.com/research.

About AutoTrader.com

Atlanta-based AutoTrader.com, created in 1997, is the Internet's ultimate automotive marketplace and consumer information website. AutoTrader.com aggregates in a single location millions of new cars, used cars and certified pre-owned cars from thousands of auto dealers and private sellers and is a leading online resource for auto dealers,

individuals and manufacturers to advertise and market their vehicles to in-market shoppers. The company also provides a robust suite of software tools for dealers and manufacturers to help them manage and market their vehicle inventory and display advertising on the Internet. AutoTrader.com continues to grow key business metrics, including revenue, profitability and site traffic. Today, AutoTrader.com attracts more than 15 million unique monthly visitors who utilize the site to review descriptions, photos and videos of vehicles for sale; research and compare vehicles; review pricing and specials; and read auto-related content like buying and selling tips and editorial coverage of major auto shows and automotive trends. AutoTrader.com operates two other auto marketing brands, AutoTraderClassics.com and AutoTraderLatino.com. AutoTrader.com also owns used vehicle management software company vAuto, Kelley Blue Book (Kbb.com) and HomeNet Automotive, a leading provider of online inventory management and merchandising solutions for the automotive retail industry. AutoTrader.com is a majority-owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises. Providence Equity Partners is a 25 percent owner of the company and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers is also an investor. For more information, please visit www.autotrader.com.

APRIL TOP 10 NEW VEHICLE BRANDS SEARCHED

MAKE	Rank 4/11	Rank 4/10
Ford	1	2
Chevrolet	2	1
Dodge	3	6
Toyota	4	3
Nissan	5	4
Hyundai	6	7
Honda	7	5
Jeep	8	16
Volkswagen	9	10
GMC	10	9

APRIL TOP 10 USED VEHICLE BRANDS SEARCHED

MAKE	Rank 4/11	Rank 4/10
Ford	1	1
Chevrolet	2	2
Toyota	3	3
BMW	4	4
Dodge	5	5
Honda	6	7
Nissan	7	6
Mercedes Benz	8	8
Jeep	9	9
Volkswagen	10	11

APRIL TOP 20 MOST-SEARCHED NEW CARS

MAKE	MODEL	VDP Rank 4/11	VDP Rank 3/11	VDP Rank 4/10	Avg. Price 4/11	Avg. Price 4/10	Price % Change
Ford	Mustang	1	1	3	$35,105	$31,672	10.84%
Chevrolet	Camaro	2	3	1	$33,655	$34,029	-1.10%
Ford	F-150	3	2	2	$38,077	$37,102	2.63%
Chevrolet	Corvette	4	4	7	$66,913	$67,974	-1.56%
Dodge	Challenger	5	5	15	$33,621	$35,440	-5.13%
Jeep	Wrangler	6	7	6	$29,984	$29,403	1.98%
Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	7	6	4	$33,653	$33,746	-0.28%
Chevrolet	Cruze	8	11	N/A	$20,773	N/A	N/A
Volkswagen	Jetta	9	9	16	$23,373	$23,478	-0.45%
Ford	Explorer	10	8	102	$38,947	$36,957	5.38%
Dodge	Charger	11	12	68	$31,239	$29,659	5.33%
Ford	Focus	12	33	35	$20,041	$18,744	6.92%
Dodge	Ram 1500	13	10	12	$35,731	$34,739	2.86%
Hyundai	Elantra	14	14	51	$19,702	$17,474	12.75%
Chevrolet	Equinox	15	13	18	$27,517	$28,277	-2.69%
Ford	Fiesta	16	18	N/A	$17,833	N/A	N/A
Kia	Optima	17	17	104	$24,099	$20,772	16.02%
Ford	F-250	18	15	8	$48,664	$44,585	9.15%
Hyundai	Sonata	19	23	9	$23,651	$22,414	5.52%
Jeep	Grand Cherokee	20	16	78	$38,537	$36,052	6.89%

APRIL TOP 20 MOST-SEARCHED USED VEHICLES

MAKE	MODEL	VDP Rank 4/11	VDP Rank 3/11	VDP Rank 4/10	Avg. Price 4/11	Avg. Price 4/10	Price % Change
BMW	3-Series	1	2	2	$25,798	$25,171	2.49%
Ford	F-150	2	1	1	$19,934	$21,161	-5.80%
Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	3	3	3	$19,670	$19,919	-1.25%
Ford	Mustang	4	4	4	$18,751	$18,049	3.89%
Honda	Civic	5	5	9	$14,515	$13,665	6.22%
Honda	Accord	6	6	6	$17,349	$15,787	9.89%
Jeep	Wrangler	7	8	8	$20,576	$20,152	2.10%
Ford	F-250	8	7	5	$24,324	$25,177	-3.39%
Dodge	Ram 1500	9	9	7	$18,025	$18,836	-4.31%
Toyota	Tacoma	10	10	13	$20,327	$19,414	4.70%
Infiniti	G35/37	11	11	10	$23,333	$22,724	2.68%
Nissan	Altima	12	12	16	$16,371	$15,278	7.15%
Volkswagen	Jetta	13	15	22	$14,346	$13,927	3.01%
Audi	A4	14	17	18	$21,298	$21,447	-0.69%
BMW	5-Series	15	16	14	$29,705	$29,781	-0.26%
Chevrolet	Tahoe	16	14	11	$23,813	$25,535	-6.74%
Chevrolet	Silverado 2500	17	13	12	$23,724	$23,274	1.93%
Dodge	Ram 2500	18	18	15	$26,441	$24,934	6.04%

Toyota	Camry	19	20	23	$16,874	$15,482	8.99%
Jeep	Grand Cherokee	20	19	19	$17,122	$17,099	0.13%

APRIL TOP 20 MOST-SEARCHED CERTIFIED PRE-OWNED CARS

MAKE	MODEL	VDP Rank 4/11	VDP Rank 3/11	VDP Rank 4/10	Avg. Price 4/11	Avg. Price 4/10	Price % Change
BMW	3-Series	1	1	1	$31,265	$30,243	3.38%
Honda	Accord	2	2	2	$20,146	$18,147	11.01%
Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	3	3	4	$24,674	$23,900	3.24%
Audi	A4	4	7	12	$26,225	$26,491	-1.00%
Honda	Civic	5	6	10	$16,910	$16,173	4.56%
Toyota	Camry	6	4	9	$18,747	$17,701	5.91%
Toyota	Tundra	7	5	5	$26,848	$24,983	7.47%
Toyota	Tacoma	8	8	11	$23,886	$21,863	9.25%
Volkswagen	Jetta	9	10	14	$16,590	$16,402	1.15%
BMW	5-Series	10	11	7	$35,713	$35,315	1.13%
Acura	TL	11	14	13	$26,912	$26,499	1.56%
Ford	F-150	12	9	3	$26,599	$29,863	-10.93%
Toyota	Highlander	13	13	17	$27,208	$24,722	10.05%
Chevrolet	Tahoe	14	12	6	$33,255	$32,761	1.51%
Honda	Pilot	15	15	15	$25,567	$24,585	4.00%
Ford	Mustang	16	17	8	$23,131	$21,055	9.86%
Acura	MDX	17	16	31	$32,679	$33,205	-1.58%
Honda	CR-V	18	18	35	$21,908	$21,407	2.34%
Nissan	Altima	19	20	27	$18,908	$17,419	8.55%
Toyota	4-Runner	20	19	21	$26,924	$24,451	10.11%

APRIL TOP 10 BIG MOVERS – NEW VEHICLES

MAKE	MODEL	Rank 4/11	Rank 3/11	Rank Change
Fiat	500	118	240	122
Chrysler	300	41	85	44
Nissan	Leaf	223	263	40
Infiniti	M35 Hybrid	290	328	38
Mercedes Benz	SLR	247	284	37
BMW	6 Series	211	245	34
Porsche	Boxster	142	176	34
Lotus	Evora	205	237	32
BMW	Z Series	179	209	30
Mercedes Benz	SLS	240	269	29

APRIL TOP 10 BIG MOVERS – USED VEHICLES

MAKE	MODEL	Rank 4/11	Rank 3/11	Rank Change
Lotus	Evora	410	446	36
Acura	3.5RL	213	243	30
Honda	CR-Z	404	431	27
Lotus	Elise	301	327	26
Nissan	GT-R	299	325	26
Ferrari	360	309	333	24
Honda	S2000	135	156	21
Dodge	Sprinter	264	284	20
BMW	M Coupe	382	402	20
Maserati	Granturismo	310	330	20

APRIL TOP 10 BIG MOVERS – CPO VEHICLES

MAKE	MODEL	Rank 4/11	Rank 3/11	Rank Change
Jaguar	XJ Series	333	383	50
Audi	R8	306	350	44
BMW	6 Series	356	399	43
Mazda	Mazda2	369	408	39
BMW	M Coupe	343	381	38
Mercedes Benz	G-Class	330	368	38
Mini	Clubman	277	315	38
Toyota	MR2 Spyder	368	406	38
Dodge	Magnum	290	327	37
Buick	Regal	283	318	35

SOURCE AutoTrader.com

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