

# A bum rap for clunkers

- **LI salvage-yard** owners say program not efficient
- **They say** deal limits other avenues of business

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Long Island salvage-yard owners say the "Cash for Clunkers" program could have made a bigger impact had it allowed the most valuable part of a junked vehicle — the engine — to be resold.

"By disabling the engine as a part of the requirement, the program is limiting another avenue of business," said Jimmy Ruocco, owner of Freeport Auto Parts & Wrecking. "Our industry is like a food chain, and by not allowing the cars to filter down, you're not really helping the people who are driving the real clunkers."

Under the program clunkers have to get less than 18 mpg combined for city and highway driving, as estimated by the EPA. Clunker engines must be disabled by dealers before being sent to junkyards or recycling companies. Salvage-yard owners say testing parts without an operating engine can be tedious, so they are reluctant to take clunkers. And at a profit of less than 10 cents per pound, shredding cars only makes

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sense in volume. "We're in the business of selling parts," Ruocco said. "If we were in this or only shredding cars, we would not survive."

Many of the cars being turned in, said Jimmy Javino, owner of Heavy Metal, an Oceanside salvage yard, are six-cylinders, still drivable and ripe with usable parts. "The guy who really has a clunker — it's because he can't afford a new-car payment," Javino said.

One problem, though: Getting rid of fuel-inefficient, high-polluting vehicles is at the core of the program.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who backs the program, said in a statement the legislation accomplished its intent — "to get cars with bad fuel efficiency off the road permanently and create jobs." She said that while some might think the program isn't perfect, "every 15 vehicles sold supports one job."

As of Monday, neither Ruocco nor Javino had taken in any clunkers from dealers. Most were being sent to companies



A crane lifts a flattened van to a shredder at Gershow Recycling in Medford. Some of the scrapped vehicles are part of the clunkers program.

that specialize in shredding vehicles, they said, including Gershow Recycling in Medford and Brooklyn Resource in Brooklyn.

Kevin Gershowitz, a part-owner of Gershow Recycling, said another goal of the program is to stimulate the economy through new-car sales, so "in that respect it has worked."

Gershowitz said by week's end his company will have shredded about 300 clunkers from Long Island dealers. In a three-week span, Gershow would have shredded 30 to 45 vehicles. The recycled steel goes to building new cars and appliances and making other metal products, he said.

## The latest

- Under the "cash for clunkers" program auto sales are cooling this week because of tight dealer inventories.
- The Transportation Department said consumers who want to purchase a new car not yet on a dealer lot can still be eligible for the car-rebate program. This helps dealers and automakers who are finding it difficult to keep some hot-selling vehicles at the dealerships because of the popular government incentives.
- Ford Motor Co. said it will build more of its Focus and Escape vehicles this quarter — 495,000 vehicles in the third quarter — to meet growing demand from the federal government's program.
- General Motors Co., aiming to start selling the Chevrolet Volt electric car by November 2010, will spend \$43 million on a battery assembly plant in suburban Detroit.

From wire reports

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