

New-Car Sales Expected To Stay On Course Despite Expired Payroll Tax Holiday

Kelley Blue Book Analysts Predict 15.3 Million SAAR, Especially Strong Month for Pickup-Truck Sales

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 26, 2013 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- For the month of February 2013, analysts predict [new-car sales](#) will maintain the momentum from the previous three months and hit 15.3 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR), a 3.4 percent year-over-year improvement, according to Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of new and used car information. Although shy of the 14 percent annual gain the auto industry experienced in January, sales should improve more than 7 percent after adjusting for the number of selling days in February.

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"Similar to previous months, consumers will be lured to dealer showrooms by low finance rates, affordable lease payments, and most importantly, new and compelling product," said Alec Gutierrez, senior market analyst of automotive insights for Kelley Blue Book. "As of February 1, approximately 80 percent of new vehicles available for sale were model-year 2013, so consumers should have no problem locating a newly redesigned 2013 Ford Fusion, Honda Accord, Nissan Altima or Chevrolet Malibu."

Although sales are expected to maintain a steady course in February, a recent Quick Poll among in-market car shoppers conducted by Kelley Blue Book's Market Intelligence team indicates that many consumers are beginning to feel the pinch from the expiration of the 2 percent payroll tax holiday. When asked if the increase in the payroll tax impacted their new-vehicle purchase timeline, 39 percent indicated that they planned to delay their purchase, 28 percent responded that the tax increase didn't impact their purchase timeline in any way, while 27 percent indicated that they would reduce the amount they planned to spend on their next purchase. Although Kelley Blue Book analysts have yet to detect a measurable slowdown in new-vehicle sales, they will keep an eye on the data in the weeks to come.

Manufacturers to Have Moderate Sales Gains in February

With sales expected to improve only 3 percent in February, gains for most manufacturers are expected to remain relatively modest overall. Volkswagen is expected to post the best year-over-year improvement, thanks to strong sales from the Jetta and Passat. Toyota is expected to improve 7.8 percent in February, led by sales of the Camry, Corolla and Prius.

"With gas prices now approaching \$3.75 per gallon nationally, Kelley Blue Book anticipates strong demand for fuel-efficient vehicles in February," said Gutierrez. "Toyota's focus on fuel efficiency across its entire model lineup should help the brand's sales performance, both in February and in the months to come."

Kelley Blue Book: Volkswagen and Toyota to Lead Modest Year-Over-Year Gains

Manufacturer	Sales Volume			Market Share		
	Feb-13	Feb-12	YOY%	Feb-13	Feb-12	YOY
General Motors	218,000	209,306	4.2%	18.4%	18.2%	0.2%
Ford Motor Company	192,000	178,644	7.5%	16.2%	15.5%	0.7%
Toyota Motor Company	172,000	159,423	7.9%	14.5%	13.9%	0.6%
Chrysler Group	139,000	133,521	4.1%	11.7%	11.6%	0.1%
American Honda	110,000	110,157	-0.1%	9.3%	9.6%	-0.3%
Hyundai-Kia	94,000	96,189	-2.3%	7.9%	8.4%	-0.5%
Nissan North America	102,000	106,731	-4.4%	8.6%	9.3%	-0.7%
Volkswagen	44,500	39,234	13.4%	3.7%	3.4%	0.3%
Total*	1,188,000	1,149,432	3.4%	-	-	-

**Includes brands not shown
Source: Kelley Blue Book Automotive Insights and
historical data pulled from OEM sales announcements*

Pickup Trucks to Lead Gains in February

Full-size pickup truck sales should be especially strong this month, due to generous cash rebates and ample inventory for all segment competitors. Consumers will find as much as \$5,000 in cash rebates on the Ford F-Series, Chevrolet Silverado and Ram pickups because of a more than 100 days supply of inventory for each. Shoppers looking for a Chevrolet Silverado or GMC Sierra likely will find the most compelling offers as General Motors tries to liquidate remaining inventory in anticipation of the arrival of its next generation of pickups in the second quarter of this year. Further helping sales of pickup trucks has been the steady rise in housing starts. Sales of pickup trucks benefit from a strong housing market, so as the housing market continues to improve, Kelley Blue Book expects sales of pickup trucks to follow suit.

Kelley Blue Book: Cash Rebates to Help Drive Sales of Pickups

Segment	Sales Volume			Market Share		
	Feb-13	Feb-12	YOY%	Feb-13	Feb-12	YOY
Mid-Size Car	213,000	210,282	1.3%	18.0%	18.3%	-0.3%
Compact Car	185,000	178,390	3.7%	15.6%	15.5%	0.1%
Compact Crossover	135,000	127,905	5.5%	11.4%	11.1%	0.3%
Full-Size Pickup Truck	136,000	123,319	10.3%	11.5%	10.7%	0.7%
Subcompact Car	58,000	56,176	3.2%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%
Total*	1,188,000	1,149,432	3.4%	-	-	-

**Includes segments not shown
Source: Kelley Blue Book Automotive Insights and historical
data pulled from OEM sales announcements*

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