June 2025

Member Insights

Car Prices Hit All-Time Highs, Your Credit Union Can Help

This is not your father's Oldsmobile. Times have certainly changed when it comes to buying a car.

The cost of buying a car continues to rise. The average price of a used car now tops $25,000, with the average new vehicle weighing in at a lofty $48,000.

What are consumers to do? Well, they've been doing it. Recent data shows that consumers are now taking out longer term auto loans to keep payments manageable. In the first quarter of 2025, 20% of all new car loans were for seven-year terms. That is an all-time high and reflective of the high-priced times we are in. Even with these extended term loans, more and more consumers, almost 25%, are now managing $1,000 car payments.

One of the best ways to combat this trend is of course to be an educated buyer and do your research when getting ready to buy so you are aware of the price points for the cars you are evaluating. Members should always look to purchase a vehicle that fits comfortably within their budget, with some reserves on hand for emergencies. But once you are ready to sign on the dotted line, nothing is more important than the interest rate on the loan.

Your credit union recognizes the challenges of buying a car in today's market and we are here to help. Not only does the credit union offer highly competitive auto loan rates, but we also make it easy to improve your rate with some simple steps.

Credit union members can earn a variety of discounts just for doing many things they would normally do. For example, members with a direct deposit of $500 or more earn an 0.25% loan discount. Members who set up auto pay to pay their loan receive an 0.25% discount. Members who elect to put down a 20% down payment can also earn an 0.25% discount. For members who have had a loan with the credit union prior and paid it off successfully they can earn another 0.25% reduction. These reductions add up and can make a significant difference in the cost of your loan. This is the credit union difference. In challenging times we are looking for ways to assist our members.

Auto Loan Rate Discounts Available!

Want a lower rate on your auto loan? The credit union offers members ways to reduce their auto loan rate!

- **0.25% Discount for $500 Monthly Direct Deposit**
- **0.25% Discount for Auto Pay**
- **0.25% Discount for 20% Down Payment**
- **0.25% Discount for paying off prior loan with no delinquencies**

To review, the first step should be setting a manageable budget you can comfortably afford to pay. Second, is to do your research to ensure you are paying a fair price. Third, be sure you are getting a competitive rate and take advantage of the discounts your trusted credit union provides.

But there are more things today's car buyer needs to consider. Given the high cost of vehicles, members should ask for a GAP (Guaranteed Asset Protection) insurance quote to protect your investment. This insurance can protect you in the unfortunate situations of your car being totaled or stolen. In most cases, GAP insurance will cover the “gap” between the insurance payout and what you still owe on your loan. Here's even better news. Your credit union offers one of the very lowest-cost GAP policies in the country, and it can be added into your loan for convenience. We also encourage members to look at disability insurance for auto loans as it can be invaluable if disability occurs.

We know there is a lot for you to consider when buying a car, and we are here to assist you in that process. Being educated on the marketplace and your loan options is vital. Members can schedule a one-on-one consultation with a loan specialist today.

Carefull Making a Difference for Members

“I have been extremely satisfied with my Carefull alert system ever since I signed up with the Merck FECU. I have been alerted whenever out of line or unusual expenses and transactions have appeared on both my Merck FECU accounts and my credit cards. This is a great service provided to us as Merck FECU members.”

- James McNamara, MEFCU Member Since 1983

Carefull

89th Annual Meeting Highlights Credit Union's Commitment to Members and Sponsor Group



The Merck Employees Federal Credit Union's 89th Annual Meeting is in the books, and one thing is for sure, the more things change the more they stay the same. The credit union may be in its 90th year but its original focus and commitment to serving its members and meeting the needs of its sponsor group has not changed.

Credit Union Chairman Patrick Ruane kicked off the meeting highlighting the investments the credit union made in its future with the launch of a new core banking system and online banking system in 2024. These projects were years in the making, noted Ruane. "With the environment we are in today you can't stand still. We have to keep up with new technology and fraud concerns to ensure the credit union is safe and sound for years to come."

Jannie Oosthuizen, President, Merck Human Health U.S., was the evening's featured guest speaker. Oosthuizen recognized the credit union's role in financial wellness for employees and complimented the credit union on its staying power. Oosthuizen also gave an update on Merck's U.S. business. Oosthuizen ended by reinforcing Merck's core values of patients first, maintaining the highest standards of ethics & integrity, respect for people through respect, inclusion and accountability, and the highest standards of innovation and scientific excellence.

MEFCU President/CEO Paul Gentile briefed members on the credit union's continued commitment to financial safety and soundness, investing in the future, and the credit union's passionate commitment to protecting members from fraud.

"Fraud is now its own industry. There is an entire industry of fraud, people and organized groups from all over the world working constantly to try and find ways to defraud people. It is what it is. We can't stop that, but we want to be sure we are doing all we can to protect members and that our members know how to protect themselves," said Gentile.

Gentile urged members to sign up for the credit union's new fraud detection solution, Carefull. Carefull is a complimentary member benefit that provides a number of safeguards to protect financial accounts, your home, your identity, and more. Carefull co-founder and co-CEO Max Goldberg also addressed attendees, providing the latest update on Carefull's product.

Goldberg talked about how the mission of Carefull aligns so closely with that of the credit union in wanting to protect people from scammers. Speaking of scams, Goldberg debuted one of Carefull's newest features — "ScamCheck." ScamCheck allows a Carefull subscriber to input a communication it is concerned about into the ScamCheck engine and it will advise what the user should do.

The credit union's officers provided their Supervisory Committee Report, Treasurer's Report and Nominating Committee report. These can all be found in the Annual Meeting book by clicking here. The board elections were also announced with Doug Christie, Bernie Wisniewski and Jeff Hack each being re-elected for a three-year term.

The final presentation of the event was a credit union donation to one of the credit union's charities of choice, Healing the Children New Jersey. HTCNJ provides critical medical support to people who need procedures but can't afford them. The help is led by volunteer surgical teams, not only with missions in New Jersey, but all over the world. HTCNJ Executive Director Tricia McNamara received the donation and thanked the credit union for its support. "We thank you, the people this helps thank you. Our mission isn't easy and it's really all made possible by donations like this and the volunteer work of our surgical and support teams. There are many people who have nowhere to turn for help and we want to be there for them" said McNamara.

MERCK EMPLOYEES FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
Your Prescription to Financial Health

Member Services: 732-484-4811 Opt. 5
Loan Department: 732-484-4811 Opt. 2
Debit Card Lost/Stolen: 800-554-8969
Credit Card Lost/Stolen: 800-237-6211

Established in 1936, Merck EFCU is federally-chartered and federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration.

NCUA

Featured Loan & Deposit Rates

Auto Loans as low as 5.35% APR*

E-Checking 0.125% APR*

Credit Cards as low as 12.50% APR*

Share Cert. 6 months 3.35% APY*

Share Cert. 12 months 4.00% APY*

IRA Cert. 6 months 3.35% APY*

IRA Cert. 12 months 4.00% APY*

Savings 1.00% APR*

IRAs 1.50% APR*

Home Equity as low as 7.50% APR*

**Annual percentage rate. Rates subject to change. Visit www.merckcu.com for current rates.*