



## Middle-Aged Mopar on a Budget part 1

Text and photos by Jon Bell

Brand loyalty is a mainstay of car enthusiasm but Chevy powered Fords are more than common. There are always the vocal critics who express disgust at mixed make combinations.

This project had two goals, #1 Keep it all one make in this case Plymouth and #2 keep it cost effective.

The time had come to renovate my '51 Plymouth Suburban 2-door wagon. As a long time member of the family our dogs always loved to ride in it. Middle-aged Mopars have the same problem middle-aged people have, a lack of get up and go. While the trusty 6 cylinder flathead was a dependable motivator it was not too long on horsepower. Back in the day an option would have been to warm it up with a pair of carbs, dual exhaust and a high compression aluminum head. That setup along with an overdrive transmission yielded good performance. The drawback to the hop-up scenario can be the cost for vintage or new speed parts along with paying restorer prices for the other parts.

With that in mind we decided to swap to more modern running gear, a V-8 with an automatic, maybe not as attractive on the nostalgia scale but yields equal or better performance with better parts availability in case of an unexpected event in a remote location. Pre-'55 Mopars possess a strong boxed perimeter frame with independent front suspension that is similar from '41 on and the only difficulty in engine swapping is the steering column location. According to old magazine articles and some internet sleuthing a small block Mopar V-8 would fit the bill. When the V-8 was installed in Valiants and Darts the factory utilized a unique exhaust manifold which wrapped around the



The Mr. Street Rod frame mounts utilise the stock motor mounts and transmission crossmember dropout section.



In order to get enough oil pan and fan clearance a corner of the firewall was moved back 1 1/2 inches.