

2024

Quarter 4

October - December

# Driver Licensing Office Workload



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**LICENSING**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Driver Licensing Office Name Change .....	2
REAL ID Enforcement .....	2
DOL2Go Mobile Licensing Unit .....	2
Driver Licensing Office Reopening .....	3
Workload and Wait Time Summary .....	3
<b>Transaction and Customer Volume .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing Levels .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Customer Experience and Wait Time .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Preparing for REAL ID Enforcement .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Enhanced Driver License and Enhanced ID Demand .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Enhanced Driver License and Enhanced ID Forecast .....	10
<b>Customer Education Outreach .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## ATTACHMENTS

### **Attachment A     Driver Licensing Office Workload Data - Q4 CY 2024**

Monthly workload and performance indicators by office level and statewide

### **Attachment B     Driver Licensing Office Locations**

Driver licensing office locations with operations and services information

The Department of Licensing (DOL) was directed through proviso in the 2023 transportation budget to report on a quarterly basis on the driver license office operations, associated workload, and comparative information from prior years.

## SUMMARY

### **Driver Licensing Office Name Change**

Early in 2024, DOL changed the name of licensing services office (LSO) to driver licensing office (DLO) to better describe their function and distinguish them from vehicle licensing offices (VLOs).

### **REAL ID Enforcement**

The Department of Homeland Security established May 7, 2025, as the enforcement date of the REAL ID Act. After that date, people are required to present a REAL ID-compliant form of identification to board a domestic flight or enter a restricted federal facility<sup>1</sup>.

On January 13, 2025, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) published a final rule permitting federal agencies to use a phased approach to REAL ID enforcement. While federal agencies are required to begin REAL ID card-based enforcement on May 7, 2025, the rule provides TSA with the flexibility to issue verbal or written warnings or progressive consequences when travelers use their non-compliant driver license/ID card after May 7, 2025. TSA must fully enforce card-based requirements no later than May 5, 2027. The DOL and TSA maintain open communication to ensure full understanding of planned enforcement of REAL ID and how it may affect DOL's public awareness campaign. It is important to note not all federal facilities such as nuclear power plants and military bases will create their own phased plan.

Washington's enhanced driver license and enhanced ID card (EDL/EID) are REAL ID-compliant. Currently, 1.75 million Washington residents hold EDLs/EIDs which represents 26% of all active Washington licenses and ID cards. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs is forecasted to increase during fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

People seeking a first-time EDL/EID must apply in person at a driver licensing office (DLO). The section of this report titled [Preparing for REAL ID Enforcement](#) covers the variety of improvements and efficiencies DOL is implementing to prepare for the challenges of REAL ID.

### **DOL2Go Mobile Licensing Unit**

The DOL received funding in the 2023-2025 budget to develop and pilot a new program bringing licensing services to under-represented and rural communities around Washington, the funding for this program ends June 30, 2025. Launched in July 2023, the DOL2Go mobile unit provides ID card and driver licensing services, except drive tests, to people with barriers to visiting a DLO.

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<sup>1</sup> Restricted federal facilities include military bases, nuclear power plants, and areas of federal buildings where one currently must show ID and pass security.

DOL2Go has served rural communities in service area gaps, people experiencing homelessness, assisted living centers, tribal communities, schools, and emergency response such as wildfires.

During DOL2Go's first 18 months, the team helped over 5,838 Washington residents and issued 4,056 driver licenses and ID cards at 126 events. Demand for DOL2Go service continues to increase. The team is turning down as many events as they are attending due to insufficient staff and scheduling conflicts. Funding for DOL2Go ends June 30, 2025.



### **Driver Licensing Office Reopening**

The Smokey Point driver licensing office closed this quarter to remediate smoke damage from a fire in the adjoining office space. The office plans to reopen in April 2025.

The Puyallup driver licensing office also unexpectedly closed in December 2022 when the landlord terminated the office lease. Nearly two years after the office closed, the search for a new Puyallup location is still underway. When offices experience a short- or long-term closure, it is vital to have nimble services to step in and fill the gap, including the DOL2Go mobile licensing team and the Customer Contact Center, which can provide renewals over the phone for customers unable to go online.

### **Workload and Wait Time Summary**

Essential services were delivered this quarter through a combination of in-office, DOL2Go mobile office, online, phone and mail services. The DLOs served 54,000 more customers as forecasted this quarter compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. As a result, customers experienced longer wait times for service.

This quarter, DOL modified the method used to calculate Licensing Service Representatives (LSRs) in service within DLOs. LSRs in service is now based on the daily average number of staff serving customers on Tuesday through Friday, when all offices are open. This change provides a more accurate reflection of statewide staffing levels during the quarter. Previously, the calculation included Monday through Saturday, skewing averages artificially lower by including days when not all offices are open and staff in those offices are not scheduled to work.

The DLO key workload and performance indicators for this reporting period and comparable periods in 2023 are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Key workload and performance indicators for driver licensing Offices; compares fourth quarter of 2024 to 2023.

Workload in Quarter 4 (October - December)	CY 2024	CY 2023
<b>Customers Served in DLO</b>	<b>441,982</b>	<b>387,688</b>
October	164,388	139,264
November	135,400	125,381
December	142,194	123,043
<b>Enhanced - Originals Issued</b>	<b>64,235</b>	<b>37,385</b>
October	23,006	13,583
November	19,379	12,147
December	21,850	11,655
<b>Initial Wait Time Average (minutes) <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
October	9	6
November	7	6
December	8	6
<b>Customer Experience Time Average (minutes) <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>
October	17	15
November	15	15
December	16	14
<b>LSRs in Service - Daily Average <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>296</b>	<b>291</b>
October	301	295
November	296	292
December	290	288

**Table 1 Data Notes:**

- 1 -Initial Wait Time Average: From check in to first service counter visit.
- 2 -Customer Experience Time Average: Total time customer spends in office from check in to end of transaction. Initial wait time is included here (may include subsequent wait time).
- 3 -LSRs In Service – Daily Average: Count of distinct Licensing Services Representatives working service counters during the day, Tuesday through Friday. This does not reflect the number of FTE allotted.

## TRANSACTION AND CUSTOMER VOLUME

This quarter, 708,000 transactions were conducted through a combination of in-person, online, mail, and phone services. Driver licensing offices (DLOs) and the DOL2Go mobile licensing unit served 463,000 in-person customers and 65% of transactions.

Chart 1 below shows transaction distribution by service channel each month beginning January 2022. Transactions completed by mail and phone are a small portion of overall transactions, so

they are combined with online transactions and shown in the below chart as Alternative Channel Transactions.

**Chart 1. Monthly distribution of transactions by service channel**

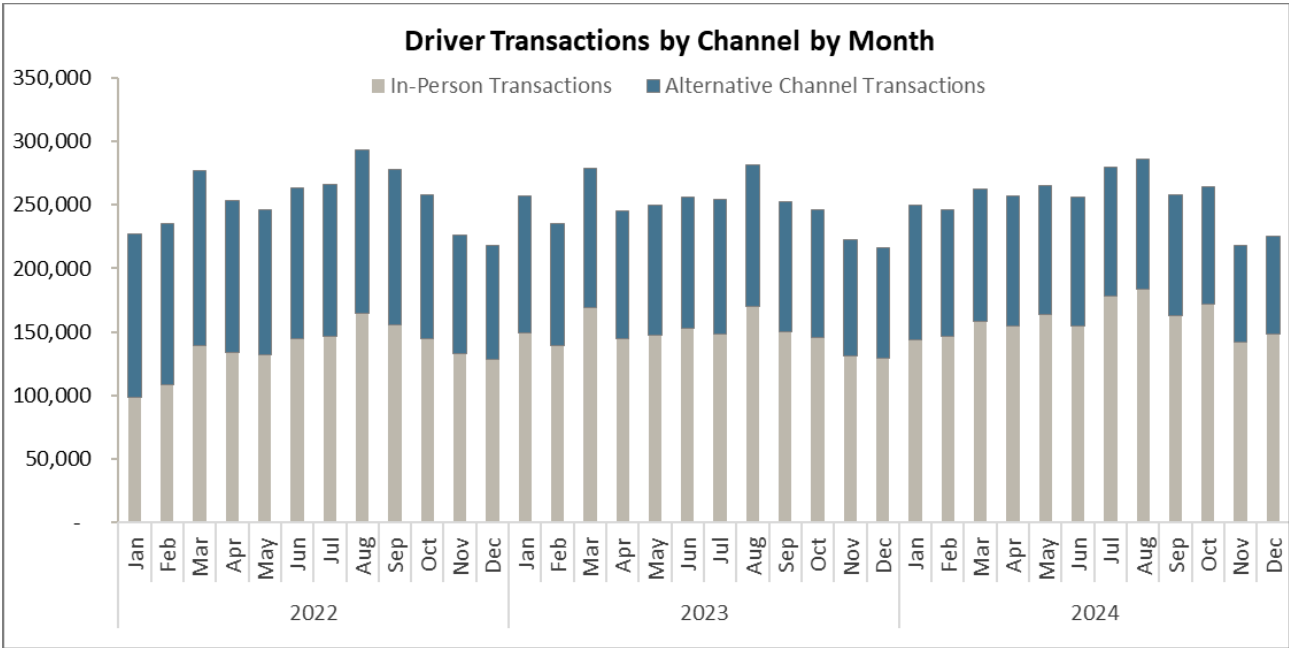
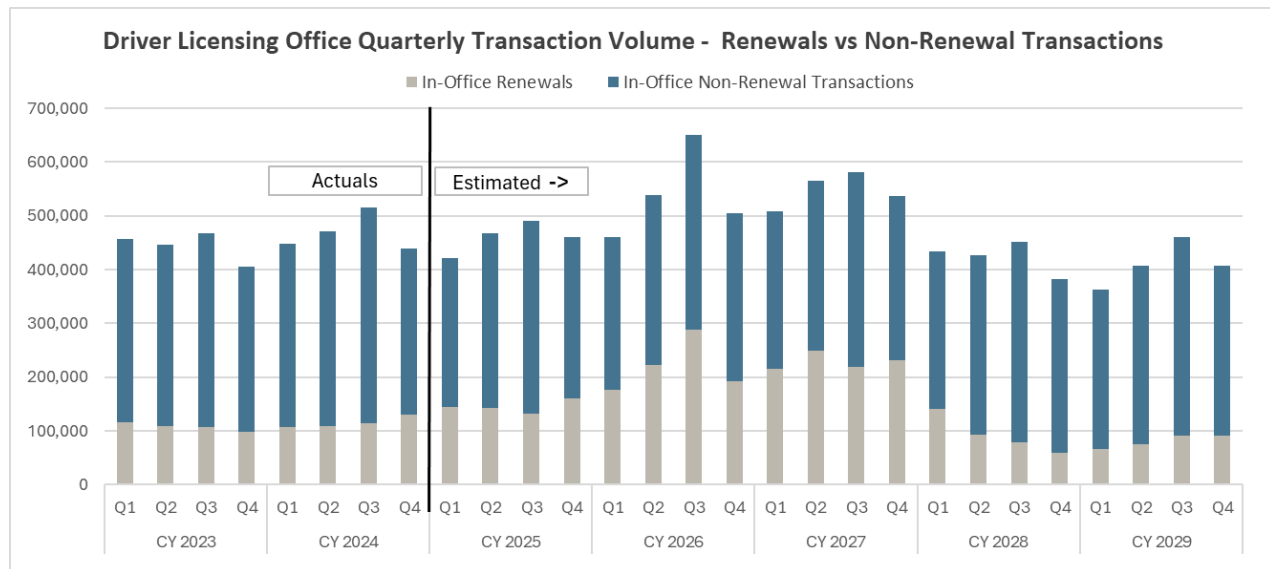


Chart 2 below shows the in-office renewal and non-renewal transactions by quarter, actual transactions during year 2023 through the fourth quarter of 2024, and estimated transaction volumes from the first quarter of year 2025 through 2029, including forecasted EDLs.

In 2026, 2027 there will be an estimated 72% increase in the number of customers requiring an in-office renewal compared to 2024 actuals. The surge in renewals is a residual impact of the transition from a 5-year to a 6-year renewal cycle that began in 2014, along with the extensions issued during the pandemic. In addition, the higher demand will coincide with an increase in REAL ID transactions, which take an additional 4-5 minutes to complete.

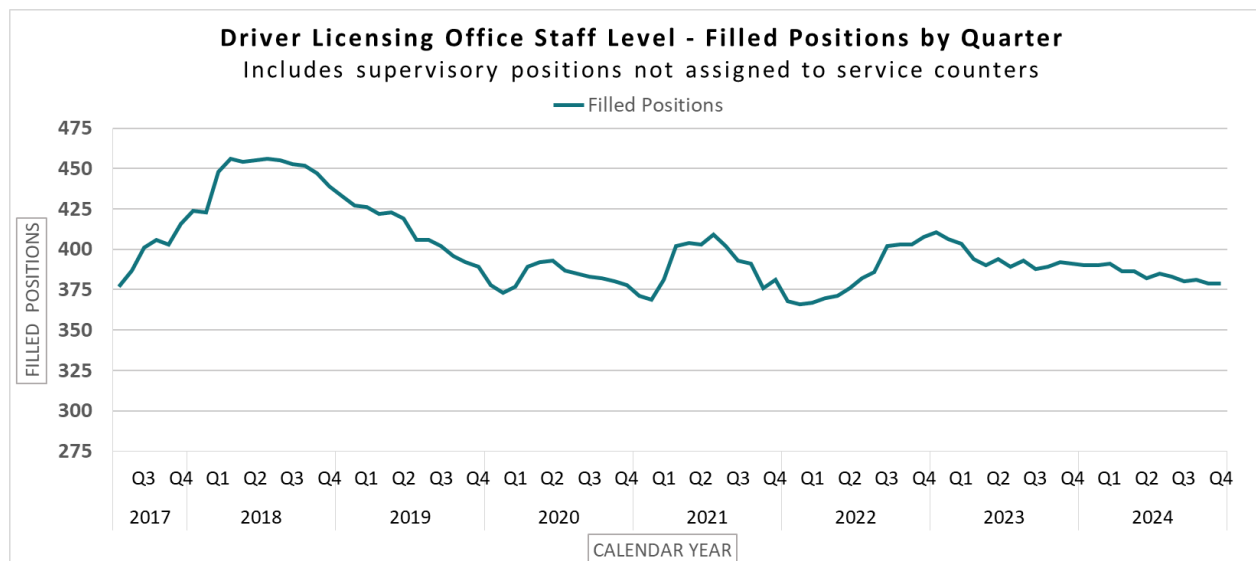
Chart 2. Driver license office quarterly volume of transactions



## FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFFING LEVELS

The agency's 2023-2025 biennial budget for DLO workload was reduced by \$7.1 million, requiring DLO staffing reductions to align with the new funding level. Chart 3 below shows the overall DLO staffing levels by quarter from July 2017.

Chart 3. Driver Licensing Office Filled Positions



The budget reduction restricts DOL's ability to ramp up staffing ahead of the May 2025 REAL ID enforcement and address the significant increase in driver license renewals expected in years 2026 and 2027 as explained in the [Transaction and Customer Volume](#) section above. The combination of these workloads is anticipated to exceed the performance target for acceptable wait time in the DLOs.



The current budget reduction will affect agency targets in customer and employee satisfaction. Any future cuts could erase efficiency gains and wait time reductions achieved. There is a direct correlation between the reduction of staff and service efficiency. Experience has shown that reducing DLO staffing causes wait times to increase, employee and customer satisfaction to decline, and employee turnover to rise. Recruiting and onboarding new hires divert DLO managers' focus from operational efficiency to recruiting, hiring, and training. Experienced staff split their time between serving customers and mentoring new hires. It can take up to eight months for a new hire to reach the service proficiency of an experienced employee. These indirect impacts reduce DLO service capacity, quality, and efficiency far beyond the direct impact of cutting positions.

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND WAIT TIME

This quarter, customers visiting driver licensing offices spent more time in offices than in the fourth quarter of 2023 due to higher customer volumes.

- Statewide average initial wait time for service was 1 minute longer, a 16% increase. Customers spent an average of 8 minutes waiting in the lobby before being called to a service counter.
- Statewide average customer experience time was 1.1 minutes longer, an 8% increase. Customers spent an average of 16 minutes in the offices measured by the time between check-in and completing the transaction.
- In our five busiest offices, average initial wait time was 2 minutes longer than in 2023. Customers spent an average of 12 minutes waiting in the lobby before being called to a service counter.
- In our five busiest offices, customers spent an average of 21 minutes in the offices measured by the time between check-in and completing the transaction.

DOL anticipates wait times will decrease in the first quarter of 2025 when customer volumes historically decline during the winter months. Wait times are expected to rise the second quarter of 2025 and remain elevated through calendar year 2027 due to the high volumes of customers forecasted as explained in [Transaction and Customer Volume](#) section above.

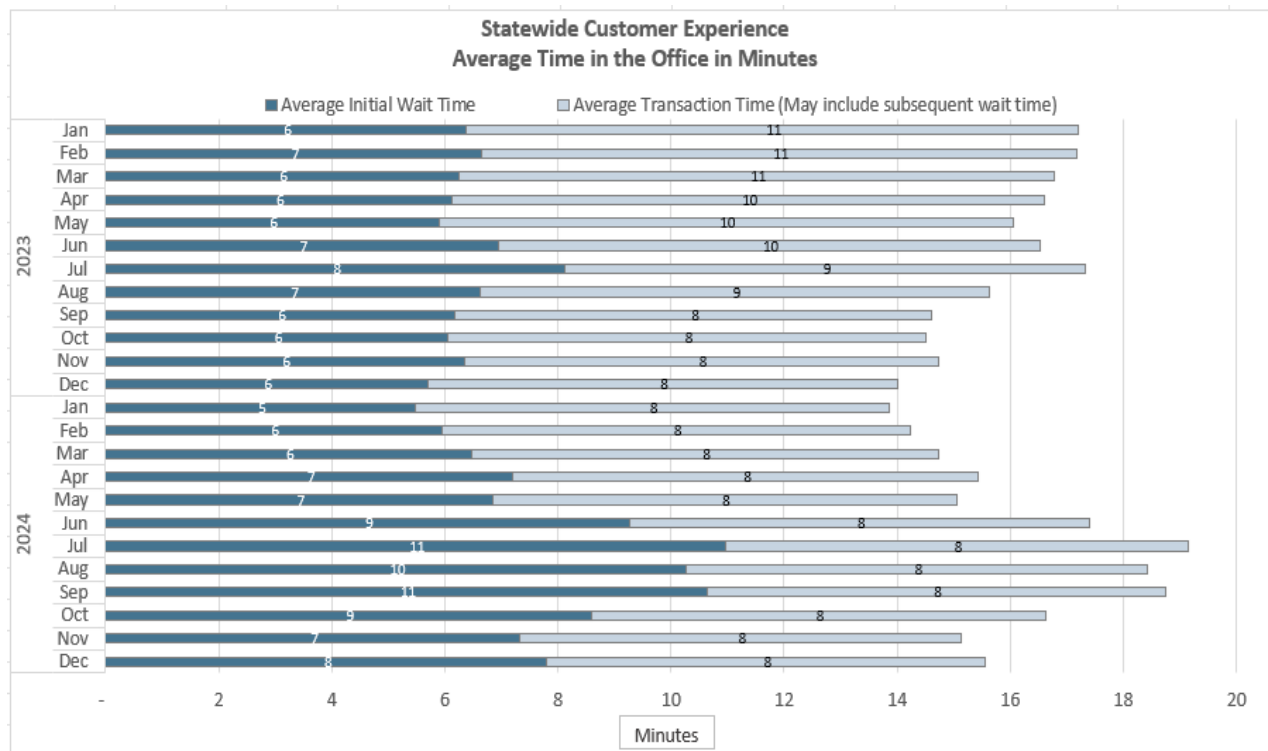
The DLOs operate with a hybrid model, offering both appointments and walk-in service. Appointments were added during the pandemic and have been shown to level out the workload throughout the day. Appointment customers are served as close to their appointment time as possible. Walk-in customers are served on a first in, first served basis as time allows between appointments. It can take several hours to catch up from a large influx of walk-in customers. Expanding customer use of appointments could be effective in helping to meet the forecasted number of customers over the next four fiscal years. To promote awareness, decals printed with a QR code were placed on DLO front doors next to the business hours decal. Customers arriving after business hours can scan the QR code with a mobile device and link directly to DOL's



appointment scheduling application and reserve a convenient day and time for their service. Appointment scheduling is also encouraged throughout the DOL website and through regular social media campaigns.

Chart 4 below shows the two components of customer experience time, wait time and transaction time, by month from January 2023.

**Chart 4. Statewide average wait time and transaction time**



## PREPARING FOR REAL ID ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of REAL ID occurs in five months, on May 7, 2025. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs, which meet the federal REAL ID requirements, is forecasted to increase approaching the May 2025 enforcement date and through calendar year 2028. Customers seeking a first-time Washington EDL/EID must apply in person at a DLO. DOL is utilizing a variety of strategies to prepare for the challenges of REAL ID, including:

- [Customer education and outreach](#) as covered in the last section of this report.
- Providing information about REAL ID-compliant document options and the upcoming enforcement date on electronic and paper vehicle and driver license renewal notices. Paper renewal notices also include a colored insert containing expanded REAL ID information in English and Spanish. The insert was revised second quarter 2024 to communicate greater urgency to prepare now for REAL ID enforcement.

- Implemented a new DLO lobby management system in Spring 2023 to more effectively manage customers visiting an office with an appointment or as a walk-in. Additionally, the system communicates with customers in multiple languages and offers customers contactless check-in for appointments using a mobile device. Customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.
- Installed cameras at each service counter in 36 of the largest DLOs, completed in April 2023. The cameras reduce the time customers spend in the offices by three minutes. Prior to installing a camera at each service counter, customers completed their transaction at one service counter then waited to be called to a dedicated camera station where a photograph was taken.
- Reinstated express lines for simple transactions in medium and large DLOs. Express lines were utilized before the pandemic and proved to increase customer service capacity.
- In June 2023, the DOL launched a redesigned website ([dol.wa.gov](https://dol.wa.gov)). The new site offers a more accessible and intuitive experience, even on mobile devices. It also contains improved content about Washington's EDL/EID documents and the REAL ID Act.
- Implemented an interactive, online REAL ID document checklist during the summer of 2022. The checklist enables customers to better prepare when applying for an EDL/EID and avoid multiple trips to the DLOs because of insufficient documentation. In addition to pointing customers to the checklist on the agency website, the link is provided when promoting REAL ID options on social media.

## ENHANCED DRIVER LICENSE AND ENHANCED ID DEMAND

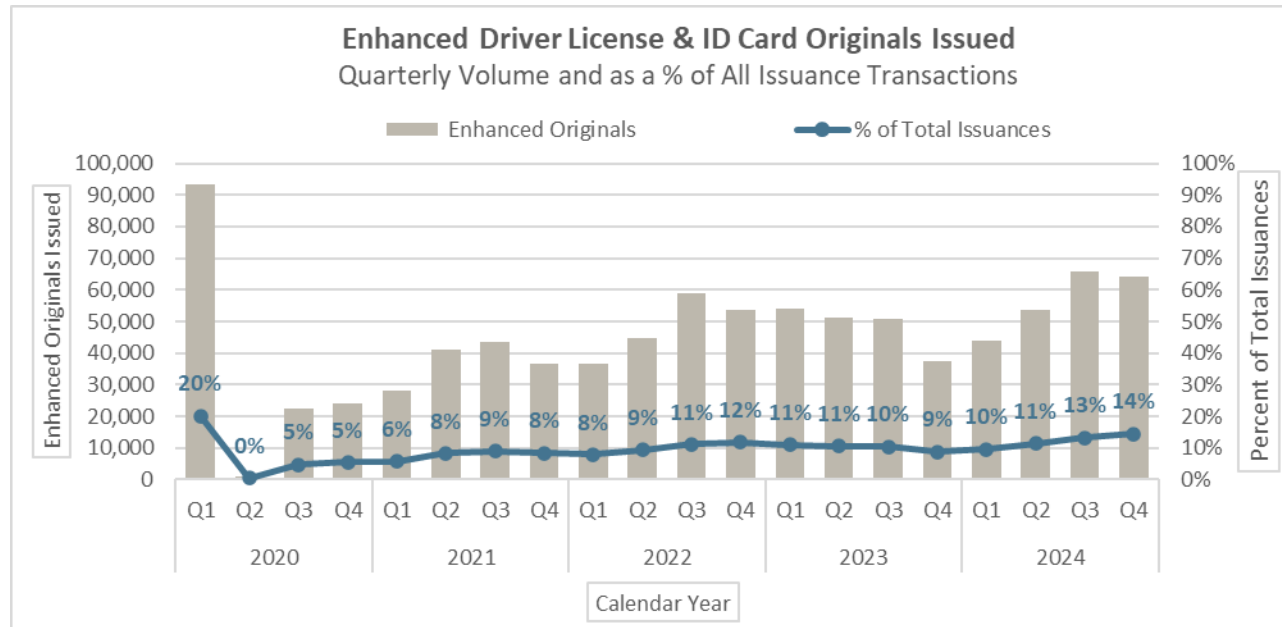
Currently, about 1.75 million Washington residents hold EDLs/EIDs, which is 26% of all active Washington licenses and ID cards.

This quarter, 64,000 customers received their original EDL/EID, a 72% increase from the same quarter of 2023. An original EDL/EID application impacts DLO workload because it takes up to five minutes longer to issue than a driver license renewal and can only be obtained in person at a DLO.

Fifty percent of the original EDLs/EIDs issued this quarter occurred outside the customer's renewal cycle. These customers likely made a special trip to a DLO specifically to upgrade to an enhanced license or ID card.

Chart 5 below shows the volume of original EDL/EID documents, and the percent of the total volume of driver licenses and ID cards issued by quarter beginning January 2020.

**Chart 5. Comparing Issuance of Enhanced and Standard Credentials**



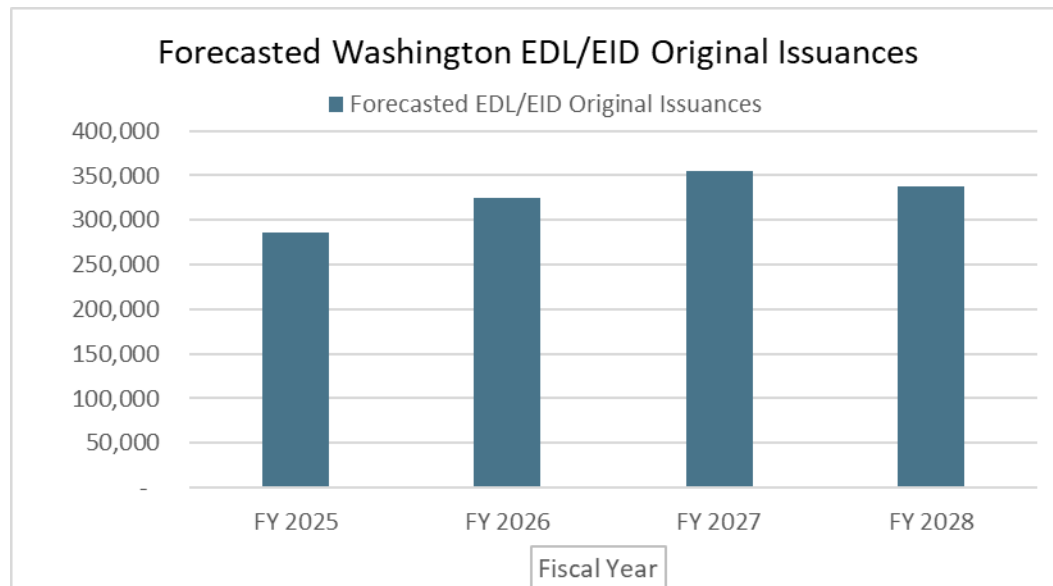
**Data Note:** All Issuance Transactions in above chart includes original, renewal, duplicate and replacement driver licenses and identification cards.

### Enhanced Driver License and Enhanced ID Forecast

The volume of original EDLs/EIDs issued in calendar year 2024 was higher than expected. As a result, DOL raised the monthly EDL/EID transaction forecast through June 2025. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs is anticipated to increase and remain elevated in fiscal years 2025 through 2029. A REAL ID-compliant credential is required for domestic air travel after May 7, 2025.

Chart 6 below shows the forecasted volume of original EDLs/EIDs for fiscal years 2025 through 2028. The below forecast is based on DOL's November 2024 revenue forecast.

**Chart 6. Forecast of EDL/EID Original Demand**



**Data Note:** Based on DOL November 2024 revenue forecast.

## CUSTOMER EDUCATION OUTREACH

DOL is quickly approaching enforcement of the REAL ID law for air travel on May 7, 2025. On Jan. 13, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) published its final rule on REAL ID enforcement. According to a TSA press release, “The final rule provides necessary flexibility for federal agencies to begin enforcement in a manner that takes into account security, operational risk and public impact.”

DOL is launching a new media campaign to make sure Washington residents are aware of their ID options for domestic airplane travel. DOL is reminding residents to be prepared for this upcoming change and urging those who are planning to get an enhanced driver license or enhanced identification card to come in now to avoid a rush at driver licensing offices as the deadline gets closer.

The 2024 Legislature provided DOL with \$2.1 million in proviso money for a final media campaign. DOL has contracted with a public relations firm to create two campaigns. The first campaign, “*Are you ready? This is your last chance,*” is launching at the end of January. It will urge the public to act now to ensure they have what they need to fly in May 2025. Videos and digital ads have been produced and approved, and will run on:

- Digital mediums, including streaming video and audio, and mobile devices targeting Adults 18-24.
- Broadcast TV, broadcast radio, and digital mediums targeting Adults 55+.
- Out of home mediums, including transit ads and digital billboards targeting Adults 18+.

Once enforcement begins, campaign messaging will change to alert residents to which ID will be accepted/needed if they plan to fly. The second campaign, *“It’s here, you must have an approved ID to fly,”* will begin in May 2025 with messaging focused on letting people know the deadline is here and they must have an approved ID to fly. Updated creative formats will be based on the final media buy, but may include digital, print, out of home, TV, and radio.

DOL also continues to routinely create and post messaging on DOL social media channels, blog, website, driver and vehicle renewal notices, and in offices to inform residents of this upcoming change. Materials are available on DOL’s website for communities and residents and includes information cards and posters in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Somali, Ukrainian, and Russian. DOL will add materials in Arabic, Punjabi, and Amharic. DOL also provides videos and the [ID2025 website](#) in five languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

DOL is working with TDW+Co, an ethnic media company, to provide grants to community-based organizations that will provide REAL ID awareness and education in their communities throughout the state. Contracted partners include:

- Chinese Information Service Center
- Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority
- El Centro De La Raza
- Friends of Little Saigon
- Russian Community Center in Seattle
- Ethiopian Community in Seattle
- Korean American Coalition of Washington
- Indian American Counseling Services
- Ukrainian Community Center of Washington
- We’re still in conversations with Muslim Association of Puget Sound

Additionally, DOL’s Community Engagement and Outreach team continue to attend community-based resource events and provide training and presentations directly connecting with residents and community leaders.