

2024

Quarter 3

July - September

Driver Licensing Office Workload



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
LICENSING

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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A Driver Licensing Office Workload Data-Q3 CY2024**
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, persons are required to present a REAL ID-compliant form of identification to board a domestic flight or enter a restricted federal facility¹.

On Sept. 12, 2024, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would provide federal agencies with necessary flexibility to begin enforcement of the REAL ID regulations in a manner that considers security, operational risk, and public impact. The proposed rule does not extend the May 7, 2025, REAL ID enforcement date. Instead, it would allow TSA to consider a phased enforcement approach to REAL ID implementation. Travelers without a REAL ID-compliant ID after the deadline could face additional screening and delays at airport security checkpoints. 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.

Washington's Enhanced Driver License and Enhanced Identicard (EDL/EID) are REAL ID-compliant. Currently, 1.7 million Washington residents hold EDLs/EIDs which represents 25% of all active Washington licensees and ID cards. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs is forecasted to increase during fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

Persons 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. Launched in July 2023, the DOL2Go mobile unit provides onsite ID card and driver licensing services to people with barriers to visiting a DLO. This could include people experiencing homelessness, emergency

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

response such as wildfires, assisted living centers, and in service gap areas such as rural communities without a nearby driver licensing office.

During DOL2Go's first 15 months, the team helped over 4,700 Washington residents and issued 3,300 driver licenses and ID cards at 100 events, including assisting people experiencing homelessness, emergency response following a natural disaster, refugee support, assisted living facilities, tribal communities, a school district, and in communities located in service gap areas. Demand for DOL2Go service continues to increase and has exceeded the team's capacity. The team is declining as many events as they are attending due to insufficient staff and schedule conflicts.



DOL2Go is funded through the end of the current biennium. DOL has shown the intent of this program, to serve those with difficulty accessing agency services, can be met. Building on this success, DOL has submitted a budget package for the 2025-2027 biennium to continue the DOL2Go mobile unit beyond the pilot and to increase the staffing level to meet the demand for mobile licensing service.

Driver Licensing Office Reopening

The Renton driver licensing office closed in June 2022 when negotiations to extend the office lease were unsuccessful. Locating a suitable replacement close to Renton took 18 months, followed by a 6-month period to configure the space. The new Tukwila driver licensing office opened to the public on September 19, 2024.

The Puyallup driver licensing office unexpectedly closed in December 2022 when the landlord terminated the office lease. The search for a new Puyallup location is still underway nearly two years after the office closed. 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.

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 more customers with fewer staff this quarter compared to the third quarter of 2023. As a result, customers experienced longer wait times for service.

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 third quarter of 2024 to 2023.

Workload in Quarter 3 (July - September)	CY 2024	CY 2023
Customers Served in DLO	500,834	449,257
July	170,513	142,789
August	175,146	162,834
September	155,175	143,634
Enhanced - Originals Issued	67,482	50,648
July	22,512	17,178
August	23,844	18,623
September	21,126	14,847
Initial Wait Time Average (minutes) ¹	10	7
July	11	8
August	10	7
September	11	6
Customer Experience Time Average (minutes) ²	19	16
July	19	18
August	18	16
September	19	15
LSRs in Service - Daily Average ³	247	250
July	243	239
August	252	254
September	247	257

Table 1 Data Notes:

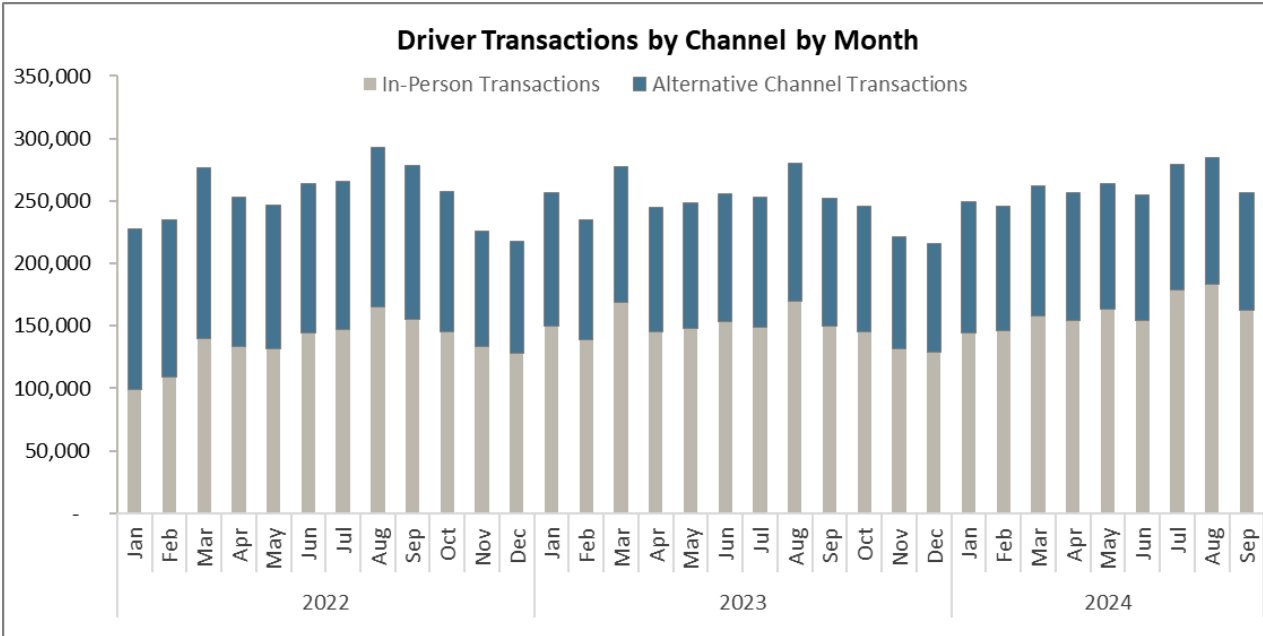
- 1 -Initial Wait Time Average: From check in to first service counter visit.
- 2 -Customer Experience Time Average: Total time customer spends in office from check in to end of transaction. Initial wait time is included here (may include subsequent wait time).
- 3 -LSRs In Service – Daily Average: Count of distinct Licensing Services Representatives working service counters during the day. Daily average lowered with inclusion of Mondays when only 11 offices are open.

TRANSACTION AND CUSTOMER VOLUME

This quarter, 821,000 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 503,000 in-person customers and 64% of transactions this quarter, the highest volume quarter since the pandemic.

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 internet transactions and shown in the below chart as Alternative Channel Transactions.

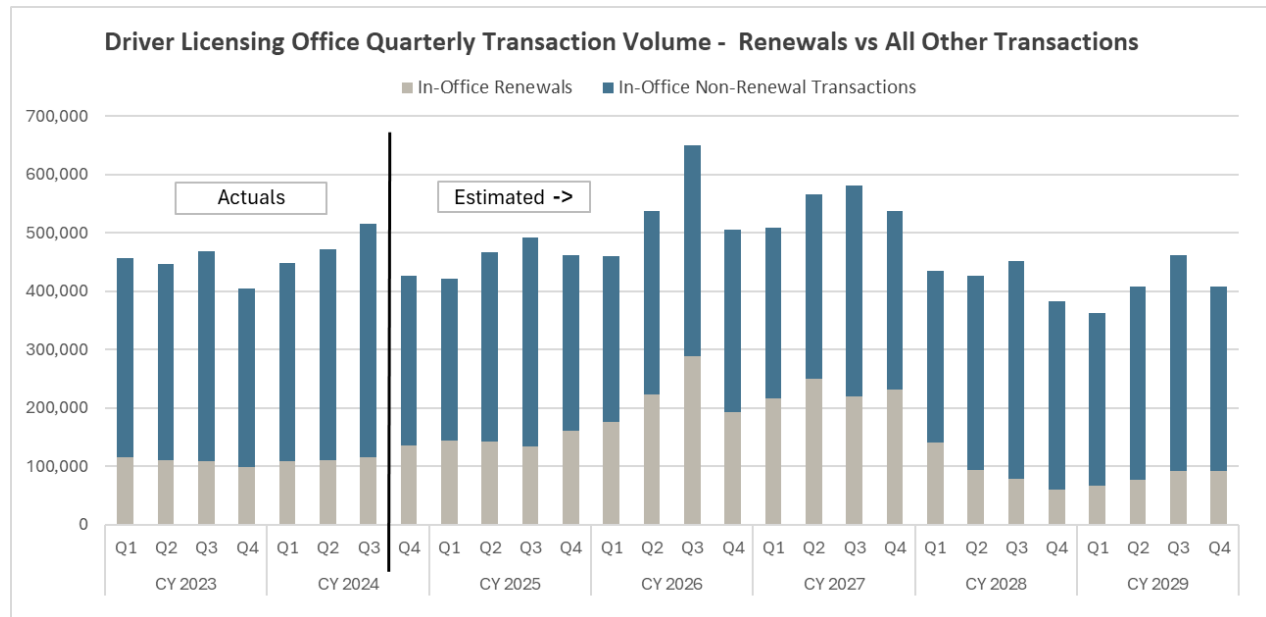
Chart 1. Monthly distribution of transactions by service channel



There will be a wave of customers coming into DLOs for license renewals in the years 2026 and 2027 at the same time as REAL ID increased volumes. The renewal wave is a remaining impact of the transition from a 5-year to a 6-year renewal cycle beginning in 2014 and the extensions issued during the pandemic. The agency expects significantly higher in-office renewal volumes in April 2026 through December 2027 compared to previous years.

Chart 2 below shows the in-office renewal and non-renewal transactions by quarter, actual transactions during year 2023 through the third quarter of 2024, and estimated transaction volumes from the fourth quarter of year 2024 through 2029. Chart 2 includes the forecasted REAL ID transactions.

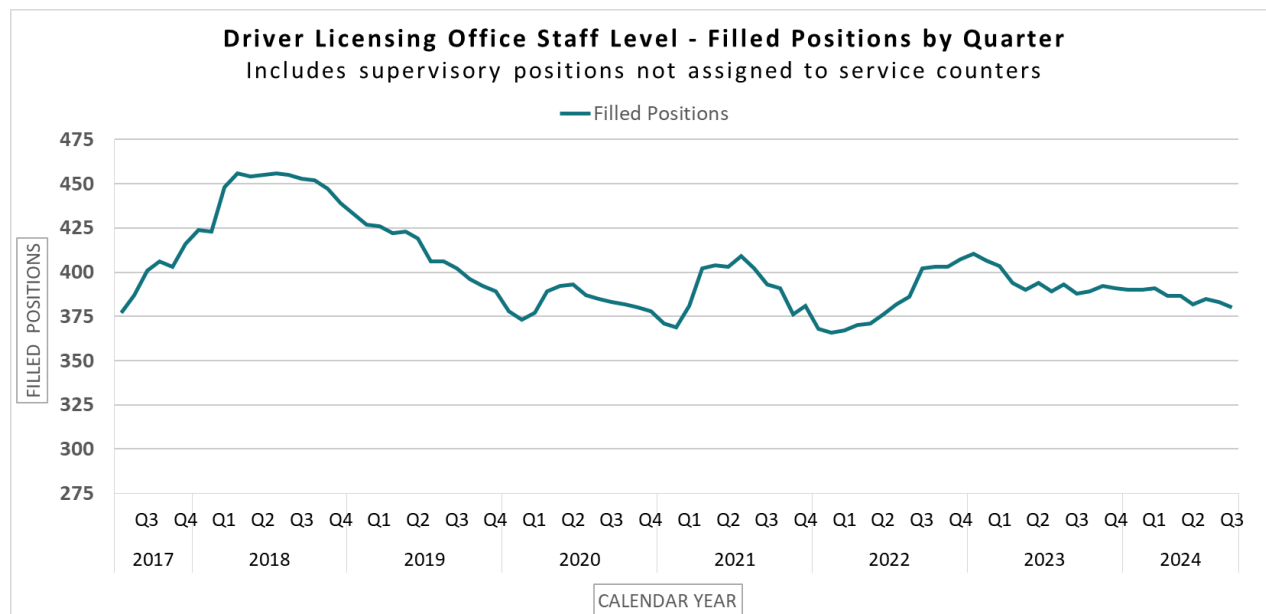
Chart 2. Driver license office quarterly volume of transactions



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 reduced funding restricts DOL's ability to ramp up staffing ahead of the May 2025 REAL ID enforcement and 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 DOL submitted a budget package for the 2025-2027 biennium to increase staff levels in the DLOs from November 2025 through December 2027.

Meeting agency goals in customer and employee satisfaction will be affected by the current budget reduction. Any future cuts could nullify the efficiency gains and wait time reduction 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 away from operational efficiency. Experienced staff split their time between serving customers and mentoring new hires. And 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 DOL offices spent more time in offices compared to the third quarter of 2023 due to higher customer volumes and lower staff level.

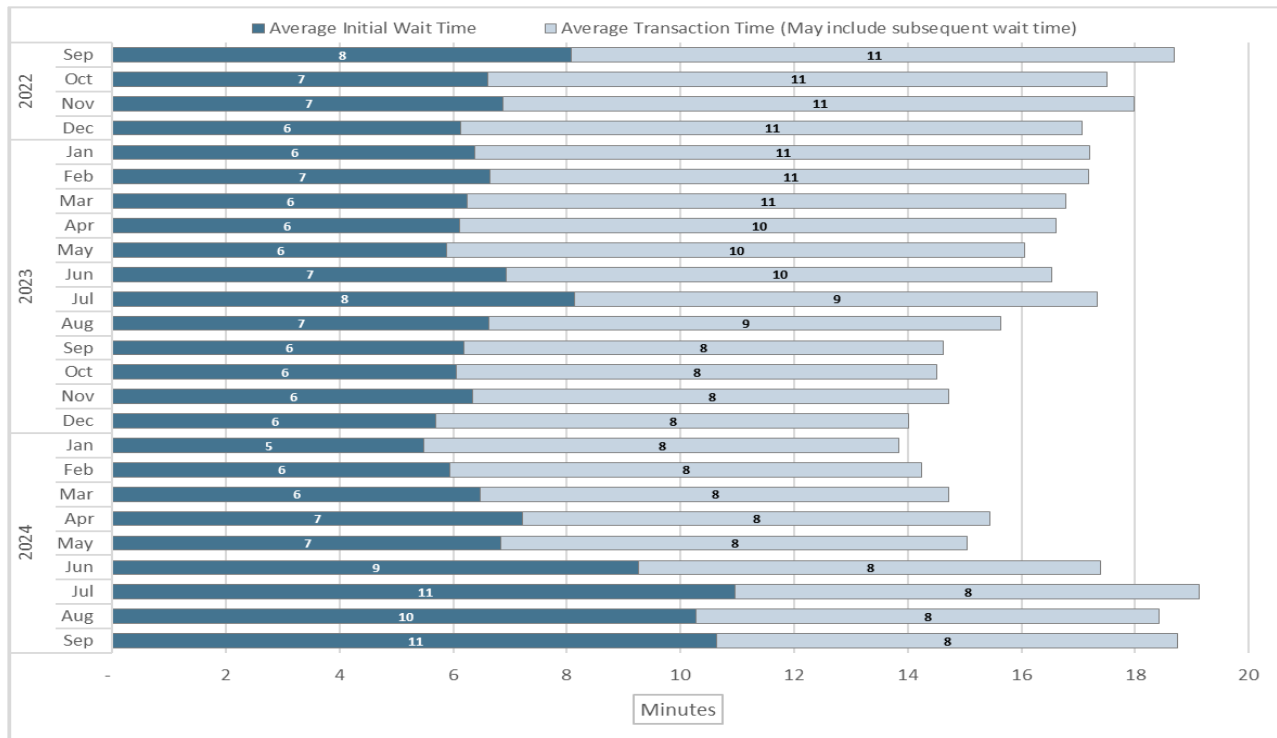
- Average initial wait time for service was 2.5 minutes longer, a 36% increase. Customers spent an average of 10 minutes waiting in the lobby before being called to a service counter.
- Average customer experience time was 2.6 minutes longer, a 16% increase. Customers spent an average of 19 minutes in the offices measured by the time between check-in and completing the transaction.

In September of this quarter, customers experienced the longest wait time for service in more than four years. In the busiest offices along the I-5 corridor, customer wait time reached 26 minutes compared to the statewide average of 11 minutes. Across the state, more than 15,000 customers waited over 30 minutes for service in September, a 263% increase from September 2023.

DOL anticipates wait times will decrease in the upcoming quarter when customer volumes historically decline during the fall and winter months. Wait times are expected to rise again in 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.

Chart 4 below shows the two components of customer experience time, wait time and transaction time, by month from June 2022.

Chart 4. Statewide average wait time and transaction time



PREPARING FOR REAL ID ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of REAL ID occurs in six 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 both electronic and paper vehicle and driver license renewal notices. Paper renewal notices also include a colored insert containing expanded REAL ID information in both English and Spanish. The insert was revised last quarter 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 and waited to be called to a dedicated camera station where a photograph is 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.
- A redesigned DOL website (dol.wa.gov) launched to the public in June 2023. The new site offers a more accessible and intuitive experience, even on mobile devices. The updated site contains improved content about Washington's EDL/EID documents and the REAL ID Act.
- Planned improvements to DOL's online services over the next eight months. Improving the usability and accessibility of online services has the potential to reduce DLO customer volumes.
- Implemented an interactive, online REAL ID document checklist during summer 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

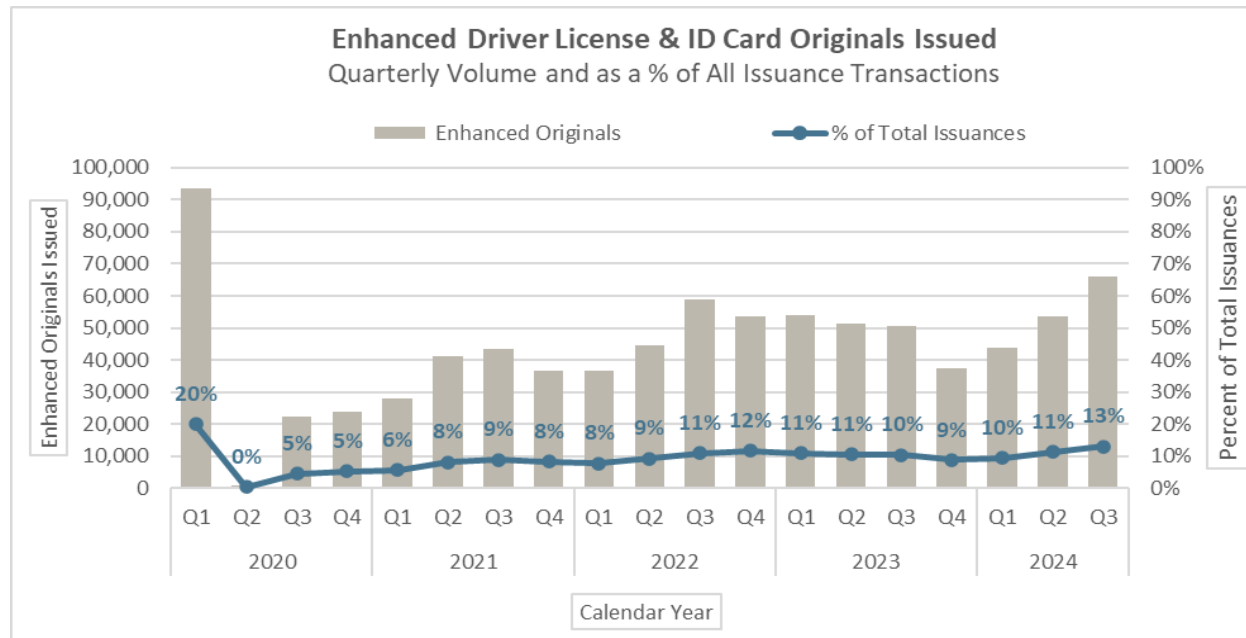
Currently, about 1.7 million Washington residents hold EDLs/EIDs which is 25% of all active Washington licenses and ID cards.

This quarter, 67,000 customers received their original EDL/EID, a 27% increase from the previous quarter. 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.

Forty-three 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



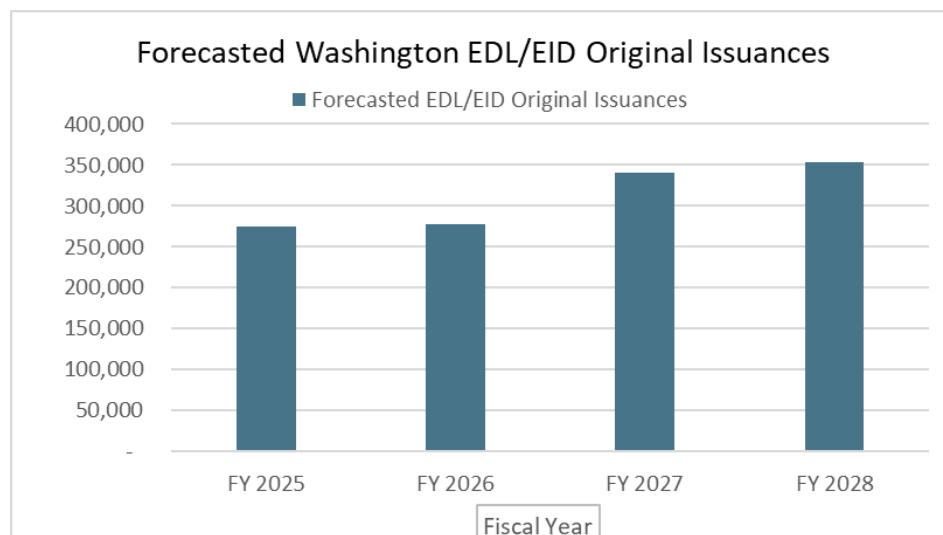
Data Note: All Issuance Transactions in above chart includes original, renewal, duplicate and replacement driver licenses and identification cards.

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 September 2024 revenue forecast.

Chart 6. Forecast of EDL/EID Original Demand



Data Note: Based on DOL September 2024 revenue forecast.

CUSTOMER EDUCATION OUTREACH

Approaching enforcement of the REAL ID law for air travel on May 7, 2025, the DOL is working on messaging to make Washington residents 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.

On Sept. 12, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would provide federal agencies with necessary flexibility to begin enforcement of the REAL ID regulations in a manner that considers security, operational risk, and public impact. This proposed rule seeks to ensure that federal agencies, including TSA, are well positioned to begin enforcing REAL ID requirements on May 7, 2025. The proposed rule does not extend the REAL ID deadline. Instead, it would allow TSA to consider a phased enforcement approach to REAL ID implementation. Travelers without a REAL ID-compliant ID or another form of acceptable ID after the deadline could face delays at airport security checkpoints. DOL is watching closely to see how it might affect the agency's public awareness campaign.

The 2024 Legislature provided DOL with \$2.1 million in proviso money for a final media campaign. DOL will continue working with broad-based media creators to develop campaign material and buy media advertising in mainstream and ethnic media markets.

DOL is working with an ethnic media company to provide grants to community-based organizations that will help provide REAL ID awareness. The company, TDW+Co, has created an outreach plan. It has also identified partners that work with the following communities: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, Ukrainian, Arabic (Middle East), Punjabi (South Asian/Indian), Amharic (Ethiopian), and PanAsian. Contracts are being written with those partners and should be finalized in mid-November. Once that is completed, meetings will be held, and the awareness campaigns will begin.

DOL also continues to create consistent messaging on its social media channels, blog, website, driver and vehicle renewal notices, and in offices to inform residents of this upcoming change. Materials are available for communities and residents and include information cards and posters in nine languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Somali, Ukrainian, and Russian. DOL also provides videos and the [ID2025 website](#) in five languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

DOL's Outreach team attends events in person throughout the state, directly connecting with residents and community partners. Events include neighborhood festivals, community-based health and resource fairs, and heritage month celebrations. The Outreach team also:

- Sends emails to agency partners, shares links to campaign ready-made messages and graphics, and encourages people to share within their communities.

- Includes REAL ID information in all presentations to community-based organizations, not-for-profits, local government, and school districts that support marginalized communities.