2025

Quarter 3

July - September

Driver Licensing Office Workload

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

CONTENTS

ATTACHMENTS

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

SUMMARY

REAL ID Enforcement

The Department of Homeland Security began enforcing the REAL ID Act on May 7, 2025. Since 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[1]. Those relying on non-compliant state IDs without acceptable alternatives may face delays, additional screening, or even denial of checkpoint access.

Washington's enhanced driver license and enhanced ID card (EDL/EID) are REAL ID-compliant. As of October 1, 2025, 2.26 million Washington license and ID card holders have EDLs/EIDs, representing 33 percent of the total active card holder population. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs is forecasted to remain elevated through fiscal year 2028.

People seeking a first-time EDL/EID must apply in person at a driver licensing office. The section of this report titled Meeting the Challenges of REAL ID Enforcement covers the variety of improvements and efficiencies DOL is implementing to address the challenges of REAL ID.

DOL2Go Mobile Licensing Unit

The DOL received ongoing funding in the 2025-2027 budget to continue DOL2Go, a mobile unit bringing licensing services to under-represented and rural communities around Washington. DOL2Go serves people with barriers to visiting a driver licensing office, like rural communities in service gap areas and where part-time offices have closed, people experiencing homelessness, assisted living centers, tribal communities, schools, and emergency responses such as wildfires. Launched in July 2023, the team has helped over 9,900 Washington residents and issued 7,305 driver licenses and ID cards at 221 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.

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

Driver Licensing Office Closures

The search for a new office location in Puyallup has ended, following the December 5, 2022 closure of the previous office, with employees permanently reassigned to other locations to maintain service continuity.

In late May, part-time offices Coulee Dam, Davenport, Ephrata, Goldendale, Morton, Newport, and Oroville were closed due to staffing reductions. These part-time offices had been operated by employees traveling from full-time offices during work hours. Consolidating operations was necessary to ensure staff resources remained available at full-time offices with higher customer volumes. Morton reopened in October once staffing levels allowed. The remaining part-time offices will close permanently, and these communities will be served on a less frequent basis by DOL2Go.

Workload and Wait Time Summary

Essential services were delivered this quarter through a combination of in-office, online, mail, phone services, and DOL2Go mobile unit. The driver licensing offices served 38,966 more customers this quarter compared to the third quarter of 2024. As a result, customers experienced longer wait times for service. Wait times exceeded the statewide average in driver licensing offices in metropolitan locations along the I-5 corridor.

To address long customer lines and lengthy wait times, DOL introduced an appointment-incentive model at our large and medium-sized offices in June[2]. The appointment model meters customer flow, smoothing peaks and valleys that occur, resulting in maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Customers with urgent needs, including those who are over 70 and must renew in person or those with an expired credential, are not turned away. Customers without an urgent need are directed to schedule an appointment. Regular staff assessments determine when and how many additional appointments are released

The DLO key workload and performance indicators for this reporting period and comparable periods in 2024 are shown in Table 1 below.

[2] Previously, customer service wait time data was presented as a statewide average across all customer service types. With the implementation of the appointment-incentive model, data is now segmented into walk-in customer experience time and appointment customer experience time. This revised approach provides a more accurate reflection of the varied customer experiences.

Table 1. Key workload and performance indicators for Driver Licensing Offices (DLOs); compares third quarter of 2025 to 2024.

Workload in Quarter 3 (July - September)	CY 2025	CY 2024
Customers Served in DLO	**539,800**	**500,834**
July	194,328	170,513
August	176,436	175,146
September	169,036	155,175
Enhanced - Originals Issued	**167,386**	**67,338**
July	60,954	22,479
August	55,494	23,812
September	50,938	21,047
Initial Walk-In Wait Time Average (minutes) [1]	**22**	**13**
July	26	13
August	21	12
September	20	13
Customer Walk-in Experience Time Average (minutes) [2]	**29**	**20**
July	33	21
August	28	20
September	27	20
Initial Appointment Wait Time Average (minutes) [3]	**12**	**6**
July	13	6
August	11	6
September	11	6
Customer Appointment Experience Time Average (minutes) [4]	**21**	**15**
July	22	15
August	21	15
September	20	15
LSRs in Service - Daily Average [5]	**263**	**301**
July	289	301
August	254	301
September	246	300

Table 1 Data Notes:

1 -Initial Walk-In Wait Time Average: From check in to first service counter visit for customers who walk-in. It does *not* account for those turned away at the door or who exited the line before signing in.

2 -Customer Walk-In Experience Time Average: Total time customer spends in office from check in to end of transaction for customers who walk-in for service. Initial wait time is included here (may include subsequent wait time).

3 -Initial Appointment Wait Time Average: From check in to first service counter visit for customers with an appointment.

4 -Customer Experience Time Average: Total time customer spends in office from check in to end of transaction for customers with an appointment. Initial wait time is included here (may include subsequent wait time).

5 -Licensing Service Representatives (LSRs) In Service – Daily Average: Count of distinct LSRs working service counters during the day, Tuesday through Friday. This does not reflect the number of FTE allotted.

TRANSACTION AND CUSTOMER VOLUME

This quarter, 820,000 transactions were conducted through a combination of in-person, online, mail, DOL2Go, and phone services. Driver licensing offices and the DOL2Go mobile licensing unit served 560,000 in-person customers and accounted for 68% of transactions.

Chart 1 below shows transaction distribution by service channel each month beginning June 2023. 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

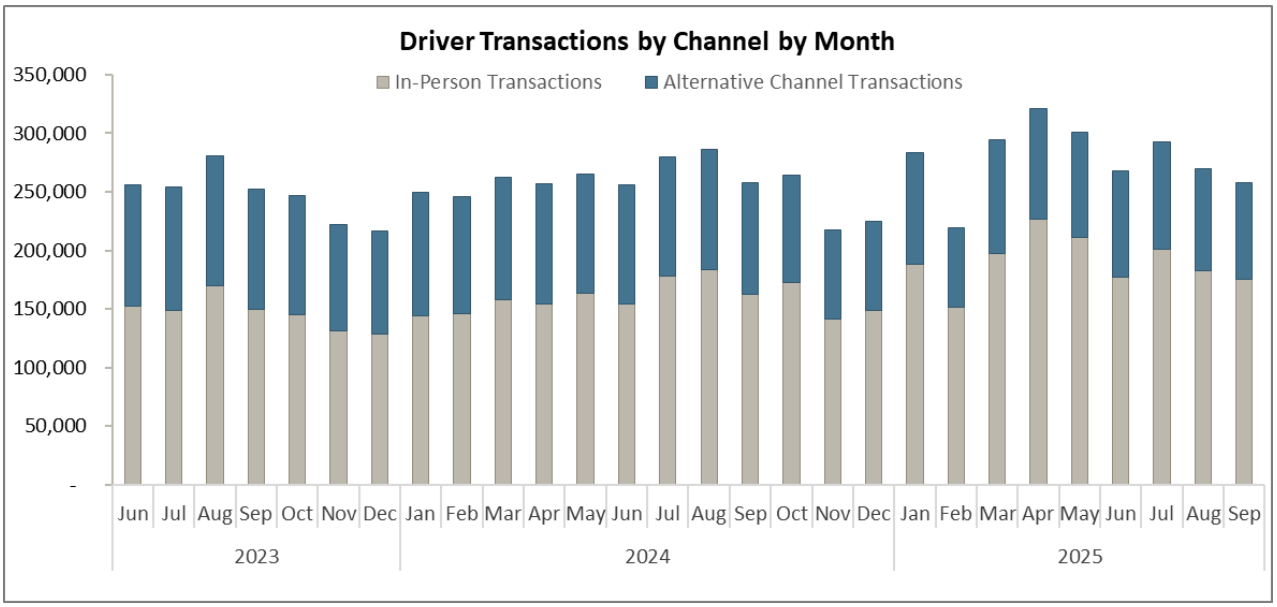
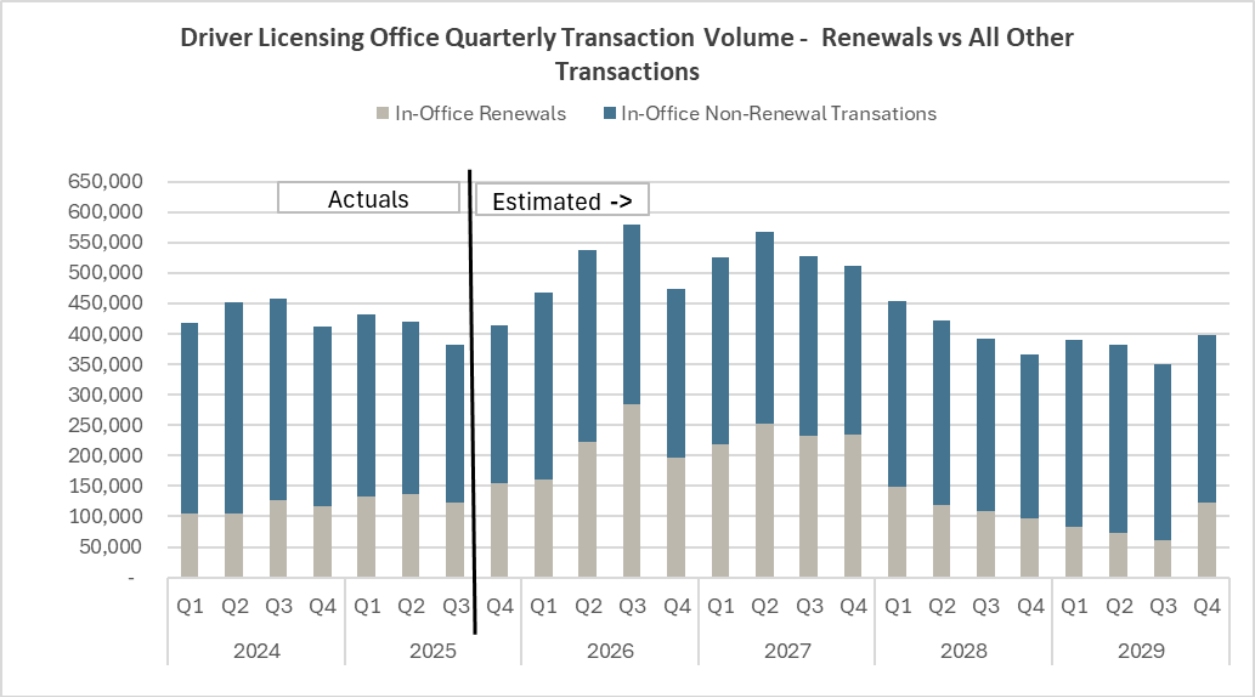


Chart 2 below shows the in-office renewal and non-renewal transactions by quarter, actual transactions during year 2024 through the third quarter of 2025, and estimated transaction volumes from the fourth quarter of 2025 through 2029, including forecasted EDLs.

Between 2026 and 2027, the number of customers requiring an in-office renewal is estimated to increase by 64% (353,000 more customers) compared to 2025, coinciding with a 25% staff reduction. 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.

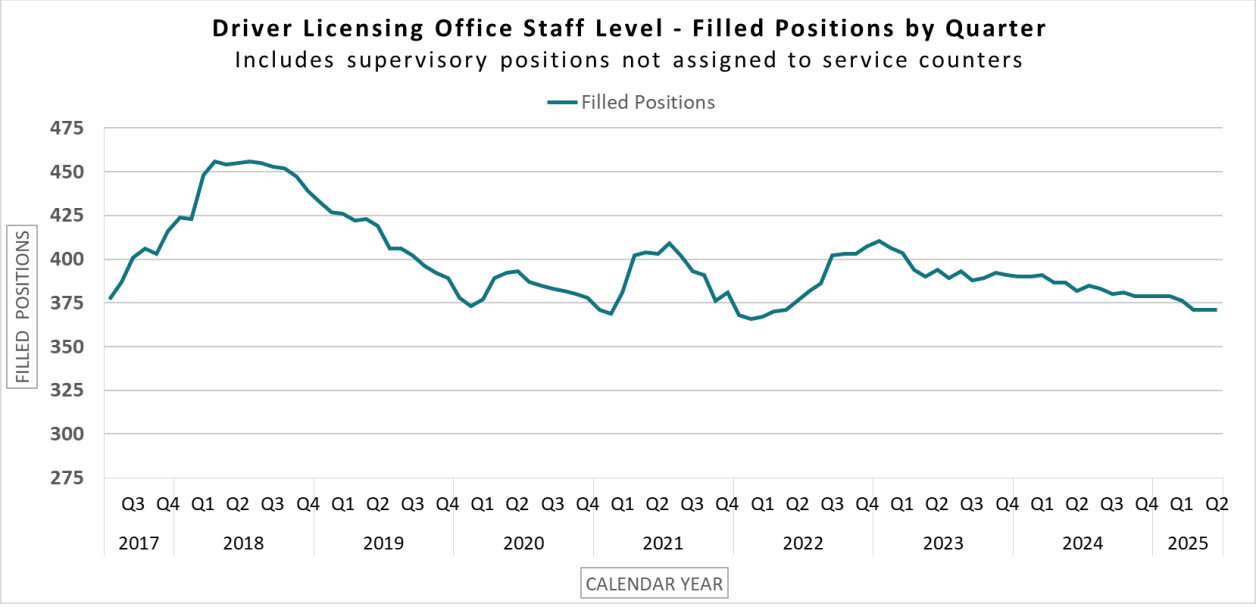
Chart 2. Driver license office quarterly volume of transactions



STAFFING LEVELS

The agency's 2025-2027 biennial budget for driver licensing office workload was reduced by $6.01 million, requiring staffing reductions to align with the new funding level. Chart 3 below shows the overall driver licensing office staffing levels by quarter from Q3 2017.

Chart 3. Driver Licensing Office Filled Positions



The budget reduction prevented DOL's past practice of ramping up staffing ahead of the May 2025 REAL ID enforcement. This reduction will also limit DOL's ability to address the anticipated increase in required in-person driver license renewals in 2026 and 2027, as explained in the Transaction and Customer Volume section above. The reduction in driver licensing office staffing has caused wait times to increase, employee and customer satisfaction scores to slightly decline, and increased calls to the customer contact center. Following the implementation of the appointment incentive model, scores improved.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND WAIT TIME

This quarter, customers visiting driver licensing offices spent more time in offices compared to the same quarter last year, due to higher customer volumes for enhanced credentials and lower staff volumes.

- Statewide average initial wait time for service was 5 minutes longer, a 45% increase. Customers spent an average of 16 minutes waiting in the lobby before being called to a service counter.
- Statewide average customer experience time was 7 minutes longer, a 37% increase. Customers spent an average of 26 minutes in the offices measured by the time between check-in and completing the transaction.
- Customers walking into the offices along the I-5 corridor spent an average of 30 minutes waiting in the lobby before being called to a service counter. These offices represent the higher wait times that customers in metropolitan offices along the I-5 corridor experienced.
- Customers walking into the offices along the I-5 corridor offices spent an average of 38 minutes in the offices for their total experience time.

Wait times for walk-in customers are expected to remain elevated through calendar year 2027 due to the high volume of customers required to renew in person, as explained in Transaction and Customer Volume section above.

Appointments were introduced during the pandemic and have successfully smoothed the workload throughout the day. Appointment customers are served as close to their scheduled time as possible, while walk-in customers are served on a first-come, first-serve basis as time allows between appointments.

As customer volume rose in the second quarter of 2025, securing an appointment became increasingly difficult. To balance the workload, manage long lines, and reduce wait times, medium and large offices statewide began adding more appointment service lines in June 2025.

Urgent-need customers are not turned away; this includes those over 70 who must renew in person or those with an expired credential. All other customers without an urgent need are encouraged to schedule an appointment.

Walk-in wait times improved in June due to customer screening at the door and limits to entry based on fire-code capacity. However, appointment customer wait times have remained static. We are unable to capture the number of customers who were redirected to schedule an appointment, asked to return another day, or complete their transaction online.

Previously data was displayed as average customer service wait time statewide for all customer types. Due to the business model shift described above, data is now displayed by walk-in customer experience time, busiest offices customer experience time and appointment customer experience time. This change more accurately captures the differences in customer wait times.

Chart 4 below shows the two components of customer experience time, wait time plus transaction time, by month from January 2024 through September 2025 for customers who walked into a driver licensing office.

Chart 4. Statewide average wait time and transaction time (Walk-in Only)

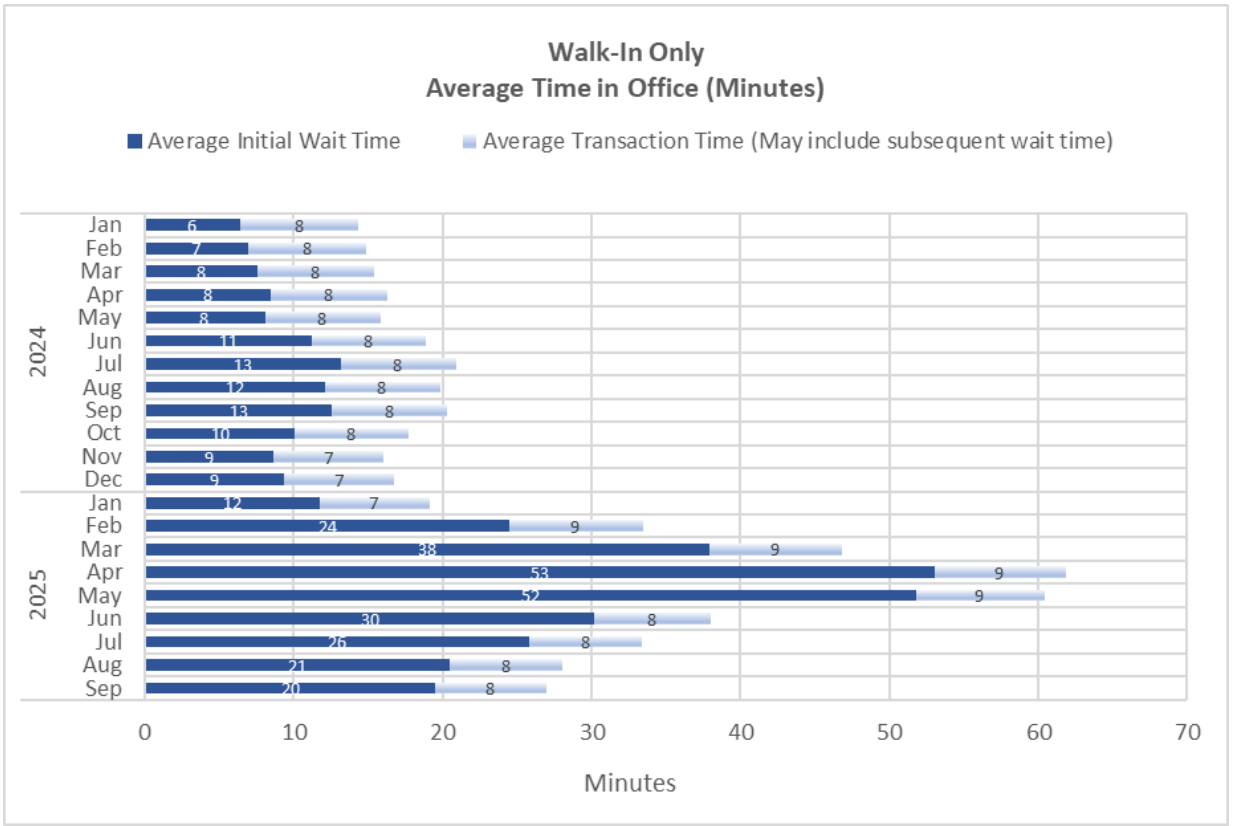


Chart 4 Note: Initial Appointment Wait Time Average reflects from check in to first service counter visit for customers with an appointment.

Table 2 below illustrates the true impact on many customers, providing an overview of customer experience across DOL's high-traffic locations and shows the average wait times at the busiest driver licensing offices during the third quarter.

Table 2. Statewide average wait time for the 10 busiest driver licensing offices in Q3 2025 (Walk-in Only)

Average Walk-In Time at the 10 Busiest DLOs (Minutes)	
DLO	**Average Initial Wait Time (Mins)**
Everett	67
Bellingham	54
Mount Vernon	49
Shoreline	38
Vancouver	37
Kelso	31
Bremerton	29
Smokey Point	29
Poulsbo	28
Seattle Queen Anne	27

Chart 5 below shows the two components of customer experience time, wait time plus transaction time, by month from January 2024 through September 2025 for customers who scheduled an appointment at a driver licensing office.

Chart 5. Statewide average wait time and transaction time (Appointment Only)

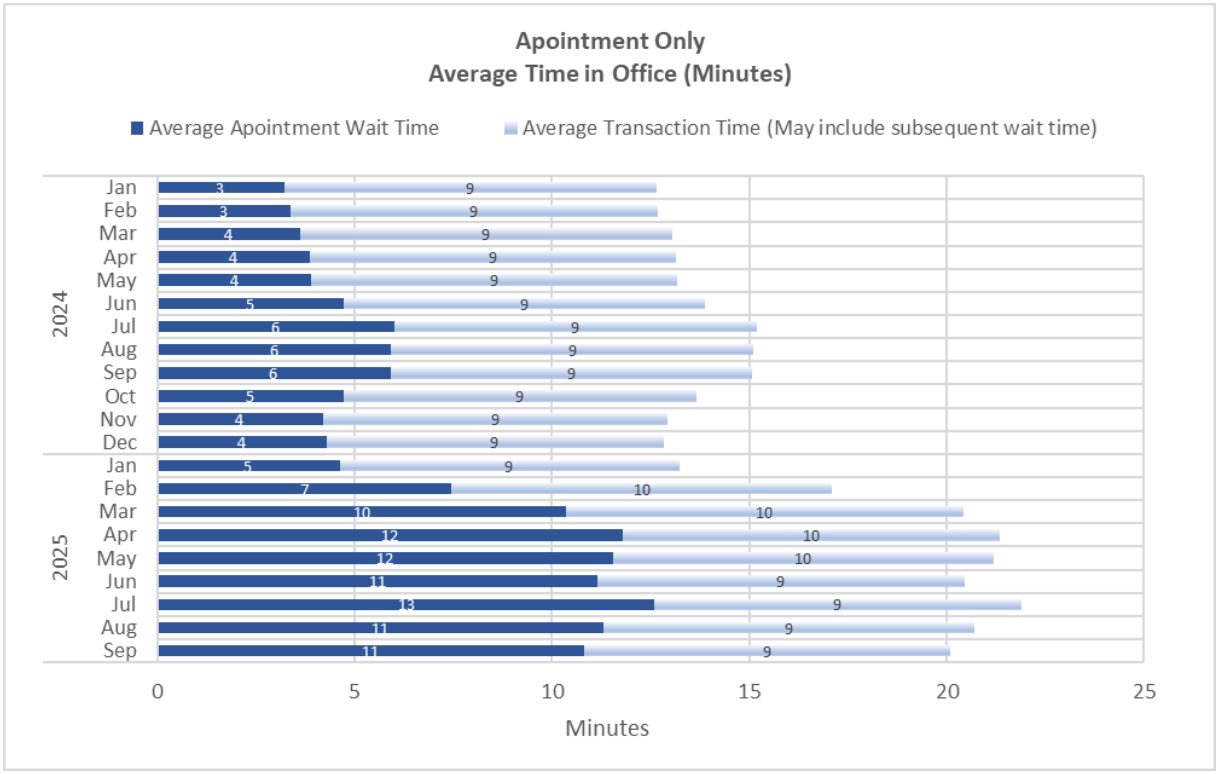


Chart 5 Note: Wait time data reflects customers who check in for service. It does *not* account for those turned away at the door or who exited the line before signing in.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF REAL ID ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of REAL ID began May 7, 2025. High customer demand for enhanced documents continued this quarter. Applications for Washington EDLs/EIDs, which meet the federal REAL ID requirements, are forecasted to continue increasing through calendar year 2028. Customers seeking a first-time Washington EDL/EID must apply in person at a DLO. Department of Licensing is utilizing a variety of strategies to address the challenges of REAL ID, including:

- Introduced in June 2025 an appointment-incentive service model to better manage long lines, lengthy wait times and increased customer demand. Provided information on social media and the DOL website to bring awareness to customers.
- Customer education and outreach as covered in the last section of this report.
- Information about REAL ID-compliant document options and the May 7, 2025, enforcement date on electronic and paper vehicle and driver license renewal notices.
- 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). 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 2.26 million Washington residents hold EDLs/EIDs, which is 33% of all active Washington licenses and ID cards.

This quarter, 168,000 customers received their original EDL/EID, a 148% increase from the same quarter of 2024. 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.

Sixty-five 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 6 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 6. Comparing Issuance of Enhanced and Standard Credentials

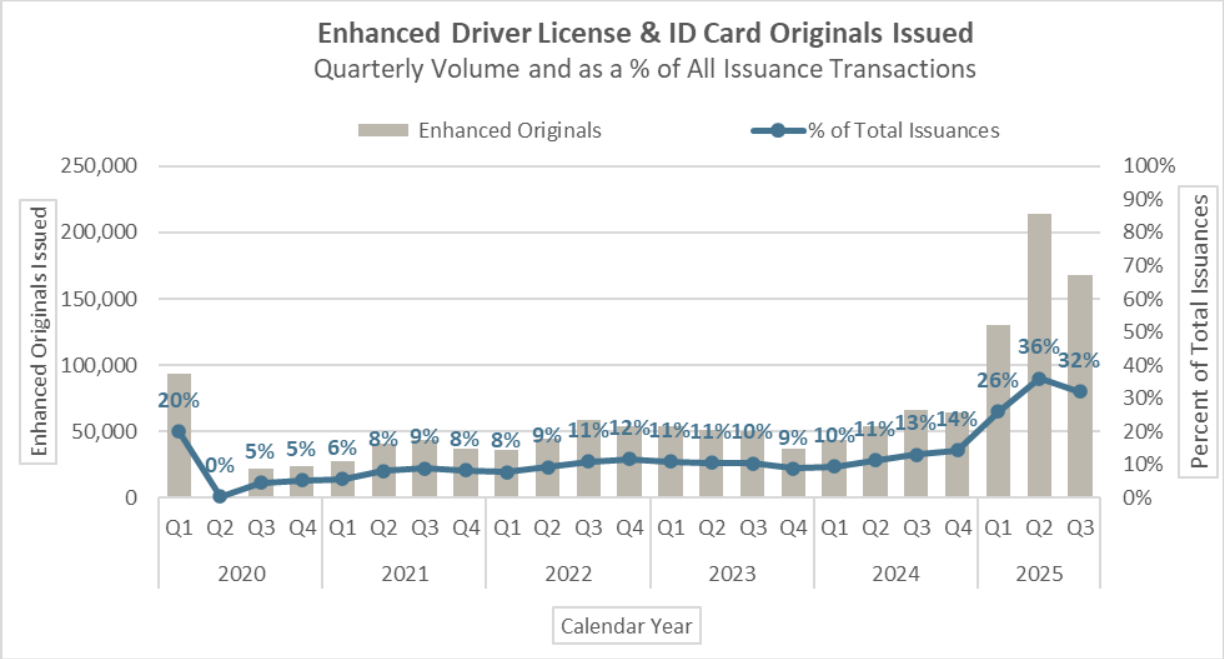


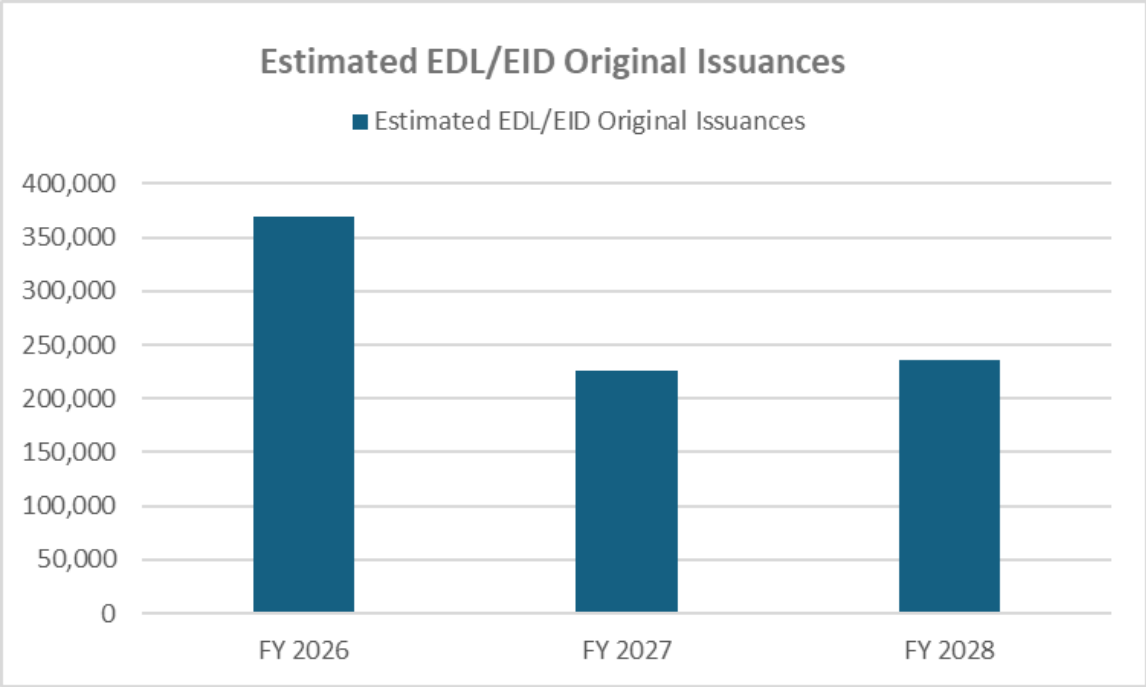
Chart 6 Note: All Issuance Transactions in above chart include original, renewal, duplicate and replacement driver licenses and identification cards.

Enhanced Driver License and Enhanced ID Estimate

The volume of original EDLs/EIDs issued in calendar year 2025 is higher than expected. As a result, DOL raised the monthly EDL/EID transaction forecast. Demand for Washington EDLs/EIDs is anticipated to be elevated through 2028.

Chart 7 below shows the estimated volume of original EDLs/EIDs for fiscal years 2026 through 2028.

Chart 7. Estimate of EDL/EID Original Demand



Data Note: Based on DOL September 2025 revenue forecast.

CUSTOMER EDUCATION OUTREACH ON REAL ID ENFORCEMENT

Since the REAL ID law for air travel went into effect May 7, 2025, DOL's paid media campaign has ended and DOL is now reminding residents that REAL ID is here and they must have an approved ID to fly.

The agency will continue to post messaging on social media channels and DOL's website to ensure residents are aware of the change. The REALIDWa.com website will remain active through June 2026 and is available in five languages – English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese.

DOL's Community Engagement and Outreach team has been actively involved in community-based resource events throughout the state. A key topic of discussion remains REAL ID, primarily with Washington residents whose second language is English. This quarter the team held:

- 21 tabling events
- 2 ethnic media interviews
- 2 training courses for community leaders to further amplify REAL ID
- 3 presentations for diverse community members