T'S NO SECRET THAT citizens want to interact with government electronically. But expectations are continually growing about the kinds of transactions citizens can conduct online and the type of devices they can conduct them on.

Citizens want to be able to interact with government online as thoroughly as they could in an office, said Maury Blackman, president and CEO of Accela. With the growing number of smartphones, demand is increasing for full-scale interactions via these devices.

"Self-service mechanisms need to be in place so citizens can start a transaction, complete it, print walk away and get a PDF that they can move forward with," Blackman said.

But self-service need not only apply to citizens looking to get a permit or renew their vehicle registration. Self-service for government employees in the field is equally important, especially when trying to maximize resources and return on investment.

"We see technology and mobile devices being able to bring government directly into a community, so that case workers, license issuance, all can be done at job locations," Blackman said. "If you want to renew your business license, someone might show up at your job site and say, 'Hey, we know your license is about to expire in a month. Can I take care of that for you right now?' So you didn't even have to think about it, it's just done."

Blackman added that Apple's new iPad could accelerate development of new mobile services, because the device's form factor lends itself to taking more technology into the field.

"I was fantasizing of a government drive-through where you have government workers in the parking lot with iPads as people are driving through and saying, 'Hey I need a license, I need a permit, I need to schedule an inspection, I need to ask a question.' And someone is standing there with an iPad or similar device. I think the iPad is just the leading edge. Other technology providers are surely going to have to respond to this. We are on a whole new cusp of innovation."