What does it mean for a government service to be "accessible" in 2019?

We live in an era where a car can be hailed with a tap on a smartphone, but many government services still require waiting in long lines during work hours or multiple rounds of paper forms submitted through fax machines.

We also live in a time of growing income inequality, where 31% of low-income families in the US rely entirely on smartphones to access the internet, but many government services are difficult if not impossible to access on a mobile device.

Our challenge is to develop a new definition of "accessibility" for the City of Austin, one that integrates the traditional understanding of accessibility for people with disabilities (see the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, published by the international consortium W3C), as well as other factors preventing access from all populations, such as the accessibility of digital services on mobile devices, the accessibility of in-person services via public transit, and how other factors such as operating hours, availability of childcare, and "online service fees" create inequitable barriers to interacting with government and receiving our services.

This is led at the City of Austin by Ben Guhin, Head of Design & Technology Policy. This work will inform a Draft City-Wide Accessibility Policy for the City of Austin to be published in early 2019, with an opportunity to be shared across cities and internationally.

Resources:

Video Introduction to Web Accessibility and W3C Standards
https://www.w3.org/WAI/videos/standards-and-benefits/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20SHvU2PKsM
https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/components/

Article on the accessibility of CAPTCHAs
https://www.w3.org/TR/turingtest/

Civiqueso article on PDFs
https://medium.com/civiqueso/to-pdf-or-not-to-pdf-that-is-the-question-5ce53097a836

"Designing for the 100%" Presentation at Austin Design Week 2017
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bpReslU2Xkxoiq-rRp-G6QYqfKmM_DkdRAkUPUs734k/edit?usp=sharing

"Digital Transformation + the Future of Smart Cities" at Austin Startup Week 2018
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1hi1LZRuSyT64SNs7by50vsQsQflZQytJfvW9OOXibeU/edit?usp=sharing