



# Sweetch

Park in one tap, enjoy more free time.

## Comments on SF City Attorney's decision to ban parking apps

Yesterday, San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera sent a cease-and-desist letter to MonkeyParking, another company that offers a mobile application related to parking. We want to react on this since a lot of misinformation has been put out there since yesterday.

First, Sweetch has not received a cease-and-desist letter from the City Attorney. Though we were mentioned in the letter to MonkeyParking, the City Attorney has not accused of us violating any laws. While media coverage has focused on the pros and cons of MonkeyParking's business model, Sweetch offers a completely different service from MonkeyParking (and ParkModo, the third company mentioned in the letter).

Our mission is to make parking a better experience for all San Franciscans, not just those willing to pay the most. Studies have shown that drivers spend an average of 20 minutes (1) every time they look for parking in urban areas and 30% of all traffic in urban areas is caused by cars looking for parking. In a nutshell, our solution is to stop cars from circling the block. Sweetch tells drivers exactly where and when a spot is about to open up. If people park more quickly, congestion decreases, and pollution goes down with it.

**There's a misperception that we do this the same way as MonkeyParking (offering an auction service).** We don't believe in this business model because we think it incentivizes drivers to hoard parking spots and reward wealthier users with access to better parking. There are no auctions in Sweetch – users pay a flat rate of \$5 for information about a spot and get paid \$4 for notifying another driver when they leave their spot. Users are matched automatically and do not compete for spots. Furthermore, users have no incentive to hold spots because they can't "cash out". Sweetch users can only use the money to pay for information on new parking spots or donate it to charity. And if they do so, Sweetch gives back the \$1 fee to the charity. In short, Sweetch is designed to make San Francisco a better driving community, and not to reward people for claiming parking spots. Our data is showing us that Sweetch is working. People are not holding spots and our users are getting spots faster. This is a win for residents frustrated with the lack of parking and also for the environment. Given our unique business model, we were very surprised to have the City Attorney suggest that we were similar to MonkeyParking.

**Though we are different from MonkeyParking, there is nothing illegal about sharing or even selling parking information.** The San Francisco Transportation Code doesn't prohibit selling information about parking spots. That's why the City Attorney doesn't cite the Transportation Code. Instead the City Attorney claims authority to issue fines under Section 63 of the Police Code – but that code section actually pertains to “Obstructions on City Streets and Sidewalks,” and doesn't regulate parking at all. If you read that part of the Police Code, what it's directed at preventing is the obstruction of streets or sidewalks with litter, potted trees, debris and so on—not with legally parked cars. And even if it was a parking regulation statute, it prohibits rental and leasing agreements; it doesn't prevent people from sharing information about when they are going to leave parking spots. There's simply no law on the books prohibiting this and the City Attorney is overreaching to say that there is.

We hope that after hearing our side of the story, the City Attorney will reconsider any action it is considering taking

against us. San Francisco is a city of innovation and should encourage measures to decrease congestion for its drivers. This is especially true where the city's own SFpark program is pursuing goals so closely aligned with our own (for more on that see <http://sfpark.org/>). We invite the City Attorney to respond to our invitations to discuss this matter and look forward to working with them to make the city a better place to live...and park!

-The Sweetch Team

(1)<http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/35515.wss>

1 note Jun 25th, 2014



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