



Learning from San Fran

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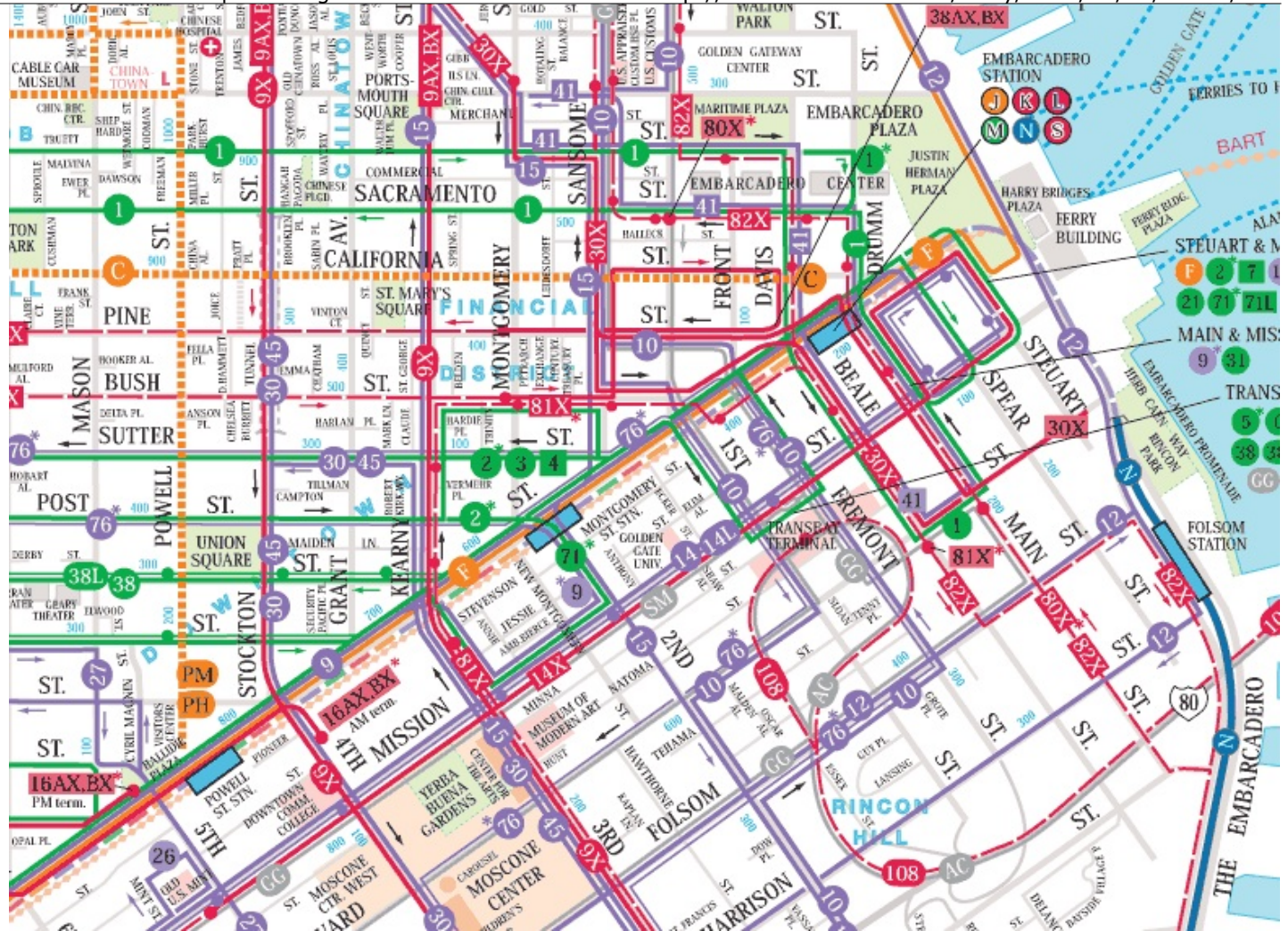
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Every so often my work takes me to some of America's great cities. Now whenever I visit another city, I take the time to study what New York can learn from these cities, focusing on how they organize their mass transit system, bike infrastructure, pedestrian areas and manage traffic flow. San Francisco has some great lessons for New York, although it could still do much more for making the city more bike friendly.



San Francisco has one of the best networks of surface transportation, including electric buses, streetcars, and the famous cable trolleys. The hilly landscape has forced most of SF's mass transit to the surface because these areas could not be serviced by an underground subway system like New York. The buses that I took actually ran very well even during rush hour.



The city center is also well linked to the rest of the bay area through the BART, ferries, inter-city buses and other rail links. However when I talked to people who lived outside the city, they did say that they needed a car to get to mass transit, but rarely drove into the center of town themselves. One reason is that the streets are pretty narrow, which does not allow cars to go very fast and does not leave any room for double parking.



One motor vehicle that gets a little more respect in SF is the motorcycle. Although they can be a little too noisy if not properly muffled, motorcycles take up much less public space than cars and are extremely fuel efficient.



But I could not find any true bike lanes anywhere except between Fisherman's Wharf and the Golden Gate bridge, which was mostly used by tourists riding over the bridge.



All in all, I think NYC could learn a lot from SF about how to organize streets to be more efficient and pleasant.



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