



The Meadow Subdivision Narrative

Heritage

The SPSF Meadow Subdivision is originally part of two railroads: the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, which constructed a mainline in eastern Nebraska in 1890 as a shortcut between Chicago and Denver and the Union Pacific (UP) former transcontinental mainline.

Rock Island Shutdown and Liquidation

The Rock Island entered its final bankruptcy on March 17, 1975 and a new management team headed by a trustee helped the railroad last another five years. The Meadow Sub received less and less maintenance with the track downgraded to Class I with 10 mph speed limits. In August 1979, the UTU and clerks struck the Rock Island and the judge overseeing the bankruptcy ordered a shutdown and liquidation in early 1980. The last day of operation on the Rock Island was March 31, 1980 and other carriers picked up pieces to operate.

After this, the Missouri Pacific (MP) leased the Meadow spur from the Rock Island trustee and provided service to the remaining customers between South Omaha and Meadow. In 1982, the MP abandoned its own line north of Louisville to Omaha and the connection at Meadow was gone, so the Meadow spur became the only route to the Western Sand & Gravel sand pits near the Platte River.

At this time, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (MKT) worked out trackage rights on the UP from Kansas City to Omaha as part of the MP-UP merger. The MKT started using trackage rights into Council Bluffs on January 6, 1983. The agreement included exclusive rights to serve customers on the Meadow spur, as the UP was no longer interested in providing service on this branch. This helped increase traffic to and from Omaha for the MKT. Major customers were located in South Omaha and an industrial park in Bellevue as well as the sand pit in Meadow.

The UP started abandoning sections of its original mainline south of Omaha in the early 1980s and the MKT built a junction to this track near Papio Creek to serve a utility customer in Papillion. The MKT leased this spur to the east side of Papillion from the UP starting in 1985.

SPSF Merger and a New Era

In 1986, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway merged with the Southern Pacific Railroad to form the SPSF Railway and two years later, the UP merged with the MKT. The ICC directed the UP to choose a new trackage rights partner for service to Omaha and they reached a haulage rights agreement with the SPSF. In August 1988, the SPSF began a five-year lease of the Meadow spur from the Rock Island trustee and set up operations on the branch based in South Omaha, with a connection to their haulage rights trains between Omaha and Kansas City, similar to what the MKT had done. The SPSF worked to develop more business and Lozier built a new store fixture plant at the end of the spur to Papillion.

In 1993, the SPSF purchased the Meadow spur from the Rock Island trustee and the Papillion spur from the UP to strengthen its presence in Omaha. New physical plant investments in the branch included track upgrades and building a new yard office in South Omaha. In 1996, a bulk transfer facility began operations next to the old Papillion depot, where the utility customer was once located. The SPSF brand for bulk transfer facilities owned by the railroad is BulkWest and the facility transports liquid and dry material to local customers that are not directly on the rail line.

The SPSF continued track improvements in the mid-1990s to upgrade track to Class 2 on most of the branch. This included new concrete tie track between South Omaha and Meadow and reinforcing or replacing all bridges.

Major Customers

Customers in South Omaha include Scoular (previously Foxley and Far-Mar-Co before that, a large grain elevator), Ready Mixed Concrete, Sutherlands, and Millard Refrigerated.

While the businesses at the Bellevue Industrial Park are in a constant state of flux, and some have already abandoned their spurs, current customers here include the Payless lumberyard, Alter Metal Recycling, and the Standard Distribution warehouse.

The Papillion Spur keeps busy with Lozier receiving shipments of lumber and steel coils and shipping out store fixtures in boxcars. The BulkWest facility receives a wide variety of dry and liquid bulk products.

Estimates show the Western Sand & Gravel sand pit in Meadow will play out in about five years. Plans are developing for a new ethanol plant nearby.

1990s Operations

The SPSF provides service to the Meadow Subdivision with a local train that serves all customers in South Omaha, Bellevue, Meadow, and Papillion. The SPSF schedules a daily manifest between Kansas City and Council Bluffs, operated by UP crews, that exchanges cars for the Meadow Sub at South Omaha, including interchange cars among the other railroads in the Omaha area. This train usually runs with a UP locomotive on the point. The SPSF keeps a two-unit diesel locomotive consist at the South Omaha yard for running the local and serving the customers.

The local crew is called Mondays-Saturdays at 7:00 AM. In addition to its usual work serving industries, the crew can also respot cars for the industries upon request by the customers.



Omaha Area Map

