



The Meadow Subdivision Narrative

Heritage

The SPSF Meadow Subdivision is originally part of three railroads: the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, which constructed a mainline in eastern Nebraska in 1890 as a shortcut between Chicago and Denver; the South Omaha Terminal (SOT), a switching railroad established for the stockyards; 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 Chicago and North Western (CNW), which leased two miles of track from the Rock Island trustee in Omaha, and the SOT, which leased the rest of the mainline, provided service to the remaining customers between South Omaha and Meadow. In 1982, the Missouri Pacific (MP) abandoned its track north of Louisville and the connection at Meadow was gone, so the SOT became the only railroad to serve the Western Sand & Gravel sand pits near the Platte River and a grain elevator near Meadow.

At this time, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (ATSF) worked out trackage rights on the UP from Kansas City to Omaha as part of the MP-UP merger. The ATSF started using trackage rights into South Omaha on January 6, 1983 and used the SOT facilities in South Omaha for terminal operations. The ATSF became a consistent partner for the customers that the SOT served and in turn, the SOT was a reliable source of traffic for the ATSF.

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

With the SOT operations secured and the network established, the SOT worked to increase traffic. The CNW relinquished its lease on the Rock Island track, while continuing a transfer with the SOT and the SOT reached an agreement on purchasing the track to Meadow from the Rock Island trustee. An industrial park developed on the site of the old Wilson Packing Plant in Bellevue and Lozier added a new store fixture plant at the end of track on the Papillion spur.

SPSF Merger and a New Era

In 1986, the ATSF merged with the Southern Pacific to form the SPSF Railway. Shortly after, the SPSF leased the SOT to strengthen its presence in Omaha. With the lease, the SPSF made some permanent investments in the branch. This included building a new fueling facility and diesel shop at South Omaha. Another investment in the Meadow Sub came in the early 1990s, a bulk transfer facility located 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 started a track improvement program 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. In 1997, the 10-year lease of the SOT was up and the SPSF purchased the SOT.

Major Customers

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

While the businesses at the Husker 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 Standard Distribution.

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. The Meadow Co-op runs their own switcher, which brings cuts of covered hoppers to and from the Meadow Siding for the local to exchange.

The UP continues to run a transfer to the CRIP Jct in South Omaha, which was started by the CNW.

Late 1990s Operations

The SPSF provides service to the Meadow Subdivision with a switcher and a local train:

- South Omaha Switcher: serves customers in South Omaha near the yard, including Scoular.
- River Turn: serves customers in Meadow and Papillion and switches the customers at the Husker Industrial Park.

The switcher crew calls daily at 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM while the local is called Mondays-Saturdays at 7:00 AM. In addition to its usual work serving industries, the switcher also respots cars for the industries near the yard throughout the day, classifies cars in the yard, and assists with the UP transfer.

UP operates a transfer to CRIP Jct, which the CNW ran out of South Omaha before the merger, on an as needed basis, usually Mondays-Saturdays, as part of its local that runs from Summit Yard to Gilmore.

The SPSF operates a daily manifest between South Omaha and Kansas City on UP trackage rights, which brings cars to and from the customers on the Meadow Sub, in addition to interchange with other railroads in the Omaha area. Transfer runs by the SPSF occur to the Illinois Central and IAIS in Council Bluffs and the Burlington Northern in South Omaha, which is worked with the local power later in the evening.



Omaha Area Map

