Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

Fitch: US Transportation Infrastructure Resilient Following Hurricane Ian

Fitch Ratings-New York/Austin-06 October 2022: Damage from Hurricane Ian on Fitch-rated toll roads, ports and airports is expected to be minimal and short-lived, Fitch Ratings says. None of the Fitch-rated transportation credits sustained long-term damage to facilities and nearly all opened shortly after the storm left. Projects have strong cash reserves to manage any short-term cost spikes and revenues will see little disruption, with key financial metrics unaffected. Fitch will monitor operations and traffic volume for any indications of hurricane disruptions affecting usage.

None of the toll roads we rate suffered material damage, although in some cases, such as the Florida Turnpike, sections of road remain closed due to flooding. Tolls remain temporarily suspended on Alligator Alley, the Central Florida Expressway, Florida's Turnpike in the Orlando and Tampa regions, the Osceola Parkway and the Sunshine Skyway. Mid-Bay Bridge tolls have been reinstated. Toll suspensions due to hurricanes is typical for Florida, potentially occurring a few days a year, but historically this has had a negligible effect on toll road revenues. The Miami-Dade Expressway and Rickenbacker Causeway were not in the path of the storm.

Fitch-rated Florida airports have reopened, with the exception of the Lee County/Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW), which is awaiting the restoration of potable water but does not appear to have structural damage. RSW opened with limited service on Oct. 5, but the resumption of full operations may take more time given potential staffing or materials/stock shortages. Tampa International Airport was closed for almost three days but did not sustain any serious damage during the storm. Myrtle Beach International Airport remained open, but the majority of flights on Friday were cancelled. Similarly, other rated airports in Georgia, Virginia and the Carolinas did not suffer any material disruptions or closures.

The three Fitch-rated ports nearest to Hurricane Ian's path, Port Tampa Bay, Port Canaveral and Jacksonville Port, reopened to maritime traffic and resumed cruise operations on Oct. 1. These ports did not report any significant structural damage and operations have resumed or will resume later this week. With the reopenings, several cruise ships that had been at sea have returned to port and disembarked passengers. Schedule changes related to the hurricane may delay the return to normal operations.

The potential for additional severe storms in the remaining months of the hurricane season means that transportation facilities are still vulnerable, though these assets are built to largely withstand weather-related risks. Transportation assets in Florida have historically demonstrated quick recoveries following hurricanes as they have cash reserves to apply toward repairs while they await insurance reimbursement and Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance. Previously, the return to normal volumes has occurred within weeks. However, large-scale damage would be more disruptive and could negatively affect credit profiles.

Copyright © 2026 Bond Case Briefs | bondcasebriefs.com