



(<https://keysnews.com>)

8 bridges deemed 'poor' or 'fair'

By Kevin Wadlow Free Press Staff

February 20, 2019



J. MICHAEL MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHY Bridges south of Lower Matecumbe Key, including the Channel 2, foreground, and Channel 5 bridges, undergo regular inspections by the Florida Department of Transportation.

MONROE COUNTY — Forty of the 48 bridges along the Overseas Highway in the Florida Keys earned solid grades from recent inspections by the Florida Department of Transportation's District 6 office.

A handful of the bridges, built in the late 1970s and early '80s, need some work.

Tea Table Relief Bridge at mile marker 80 in Islamorada and the two short Cow Key Channel bridges leading to Key West were tagged as being in "poor" condition.

Five other bridges — the two Bahia Honda bridges, Long Key Bridge, Channel 2 Bridge and Ohio Missouri Channel Bridge — were moved up the priority list when rated as being in "fair" condition.

Bridges classified as "poor" or "fair" will receive more frequent inspections, according to FDOT officials.

"Those are being addressed with some sort of improvement to bring them up to standards," agency engineer Daniel Iglesias told an Islamorada community group earlier this month.

"Rest assured that all [FDOT] bridges within Monroe County are in sound condition and everyone should feel safe while using them," spokesman Rodolfo Roman said in an email. "A plan to repair the Tea Table Relief Bridge is anticipated to occur in a few months. Construction is also tentatively scheduled in April 2020 for the Cow Key Channel bridges."

The Bahia Honda bridges, affected by Hurricane Irma, also are scheduled for repairs soon. An inspection by engineers who will design a more intense "rehabilitation" will follow.

Remaining bridges in "fair" condition are being evaluated by engineers before a timetable is finalized.

"After every inspection, a bridge is evaluated and proper repairs or rehabilitations are programmed," Roman said. "Usually repairs are completed within a year from the evaluation, and rehabilitations within three to five years since they need to follow a design phase.

"For the most part, bridge repairs and rehabilitations have little to no impact on traffic."

The exception will be rehabilitation of the Cow Key Channel bridges.

“This project will require the replacement of three out of nine spans on each of the bridges,” Roman said. “FDOT is working with the city of Key West and Monroe County to minimize the impact to the public throughout the course of this project.”

In late 2018, FDOT agreed to aim for a shorter timeframe on the Cow Key Channel work.

A rehabilitation of Long Key Bridge was finished in May 2016 at a cost of \$12 million but some additional repairs are required.

Most of the “new” U.S. 1 bridges in the Keys were built with a 50-year life expectancy. That was 39 years ago, Iglesias said, “but we expect them to last beyond that.”

kwadlow@keysnews.com