The geographic issue relates to road closures due to landslides.

The nature of the issue

The issue is that the Gorge road suffered a massive landslide of 370,000 cubic metres of rock and soil after a severe storm hit the area. This slip caused the road to be closed for 15 months. The road is open now but people still want to find a solution to the frequent slips and closures on the Gorge road. People have mainly been negatively affected by the road closure. Truck drivers have been forced to used alternative routes, Saddle road or the Pahiatua Track, this has meant more time on the road and longer journeys as these routes are 8km longer or more than the direct Gorge road.

The environment has been affected. The rock face has lost over 370,000 sq.m. of rock and soil, debris has fallen into the Manawatu River. This has affected the water quality and the fish and invertebrates that live in the river and further downstream.

Different viewpoints

Local Residents: Residents on both sides of the Manawatu Gorge have been affected and are upset about the road closure. More traffic has been in Ashurst as the detour over Saddle road starts here... Residents who live in Woodville have been forced to spend more money ($60 a week) and time commuting to Palmerston North over the Track and the Saddle... Residents on both sides of the gorge need a long-term solution.

Strengths and weaknesses of the courses of action

Option 1: Keep the status quo - repair the road and move slips when they happen $19 million has already been spent repairing Gorge road; the government would be stupid if they closed it now. The strengths are that the road has been repaired,
strengthened, bolted, and the rock face covered in mesh. It should last for a long time. The weakness of this option is that the weather in New Zealand cannot be relied upon and a severe storm may cause another land slide or slip and cause the road to be closed.