



**Trust  
Tairāwhiti**  
Regional Wellbeing  
He Tohu Ora

# Waioweka Gorge Closure

Impacts  
May 2026

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Cover image by Jordan Perry – State Highway 2 Waioweka Gorge, Opato Stream.

# Purpose

This document summarises the current evidence that Trust Tairāwhiti has on the economic impact of the Waioweka Gorge closure based on business evidence, local intelligence and economic analysis. Its central finding is that the closure should be understood as a regional economic resilience shock, not simply a short-term transport disruption.

The evidence supports treating reliable State Highway 2 (SH2) access as a regional economic resilience priority. A separate investment assessment would be needed to compare infrastructure options, costs and benefit-cost outcomes, but this analysis shows that unreliable access imposes material costs on freight, business operations, visitor demand and regional confidence.

This report focuses primarily on the economic impact of closures, however the impact of reliable transport connections on social wellbeing is also just as clear.

# Notes on primary data sources

This report draws on several evidence sources. Together, these sources provide a mixed evidence base: economic modelling, supply-chain analysis, observed spending data, self-reported business impacts and local commercial intelligence. Each source has limitations but read together they show a consistent pattern of higher costs, reduced reliability, weaker confidence and wider regional economic risk.

## Infometrics Waioweka Gorge Closure - Rapid Economic Cost Estimate

Infometrics undertook an analysis for Trust Tairāwhiti on the economic cost to Gisborne when the Waioweka Gorge is closed. It estimates the additional cost of using longer detour routes, including extra travel time and vehicle operating costs, and identifies the share of Gisborne's road-dependent tradeable GDP exposed to disruption. This source is used as the main quantified base for direct closure costs, while recognising that it does not capture all wider confidence, visitor, workforce or investment effects.



Scan me with your phone camera to view the  
Waioweka Gorge Closure - Rapid Economic Cost Estimate



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## Infometrics / EC Consult Horticulture Supply Chain Report

Prepared for Horticulture NZ, this report provides a wider supply-chain context, including the volume and value of Gisborne horticultural production and the importance of SH2 North for movements from Gisborne to Auckland and the Bay of Plenty. The report identifies the scale of produce moving out of Gisborne, the reliance on the SH2 Gisborne to Ōpōtiki route, and the potential exposure of valuable and perishable horticultural products when that route is closed or restricted.



Scan me with your phone camera to view the  
Infometrics EC Consult Horticulture Supply Chain Report



[www.hortnz.co.nz](http://www.hortnz.co.nz)

### Visitor spend impact analysis

We have analysed MarketView card spend data to provide an indicative measure of the short-term impact on the visitor economy during the Waioweka Gorge closure and restricted convoy period. It compares visitor credit card spending in Tairāwhiti from week ending 28 December 2025 to week ending 8 March 2026 against the previous year's data.

The MarketView data represents the total value of in-person electronic card transactions. The data is received from Worldline (formerly known as Paymark), the largest electronic card payment network in New Zealand. Through a combination of source data and methodologies developed from projects completed over the last 15 years, MarketView is able to accurately quantify the:

- Value of spending in the majority of business-to-consumer ANZSIC categories.
- Source and origin of those payments (e.g. domestic by territorial authority or region vs international) to determine accurately where a cardholder is from.
- Date of purchase(s).
- Retail category of merchants, as defined by 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) codes.

### Business survey evidence

Following the closure of the SH2 North on 6 January and the subsequent closure of SH35, Trust Tairāwhiti undertook a business survey to capture direct feedback from local businesses on how the closure and wider road-access disruptions affected their operations. It was designed to identify practical impacts on revenue, freight, staffing, supplies, visitor confidence and future business planning, so the regional economic effects could be understood alongside formal cost estimates.

The survey response data contains 115 completed responses, of which 69 were explicitly related to the Waioweka Gorge. The remainder were potentially related or primarily impacted by the closures of SH35 on the East Cape. For this report, we have included the 69 responses focused on SH2 via Waioweka Gorge.

### How to read the numbers

The quantified impacts in this document should not be added together as a single total economic loss. They measure different but overlapping parts of the impact: direct transport cost, disrupted road-dependent economic activity, reported business revenue and cost pressure, freight surcharge effects, and observed visitor spend changes.

The phrase GDP disrupted means the value of economic activity exposed to delay, higher cost or reduced reliability. It does not mean all that value disappears. Some activity still occurs through detours, but at a higher cost and with lower reliability.

The visitor-spend figures should be read as evidence consistent with a closure-related demand shock, not as a fully isolated causal estimate. Other factors such as weather, events, wider tourism conditions, inflation, air travel and other road disruptions may also affect year-on-year spending.

### Limitations and Interpretations

- Infometrics' estimates provide a conservative quantified base for direct detour costs and road-dependent GDP disruption. They do not capture all confidence, investment, visitor, workforce or wellbeing impacts.
- Visitor spend data is year-on-year and should be read as consistent with a closure-related demand shock, not as a fully isolated causal estimate.
- The dollar figures in this document should not be added together. They measure different and sometimes overlapping parts of the same overall economic shock.
- Referenced reports should be read in conjunction with this report to understand the specific methodologies, limitations and explanations.

# Executive summary

The section of SH 2 through the Waioweka Gorge is one of the region's most important economic lifelines. It connects Tairāwhiti to Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Auckland and the upper North Island, and underpins the movement of freight, visitors, workers, essential goods and high-value primary production. When the route is closed or unreliable, the effects are felt across the entire regional economy.

The January–February 2026 closure demonstrated that unreliable access through the Waioweka Gorge creates a regional economic shock with the impacts extending well beyond extra travel time. Businesses faced higher freight costs, delayed inputs, missed delivery windows, staffing disruption, weaker customer confidence, reduced visitor demand and uncertainty over future investment. For many businesses, even partial access through managed convoys did not restore normal operations.

Restricted access is not the same as normal access. Even when limited convoys operate, businesses must plan around uncertainty, possible cancellation, longer journey times, driver-hour limits, disrupted receipt windows and additional cost. This reduces the value of the route for business planning, freight scheduling, visitor travel, production and investment decisions.

It is challenging to accurately measure the full-scale economic impact of these closures and the resulting deterioration in confidence. This report aims to outline the parts we can measure alongside direct feedback from businesses, bringing the impacts to life in a way that numbers alone can't. While the information presented clearly shows significant impacts, it in no way captures the full scale of the short-term economic disruption or the long term consequences from lost visitor confidence, delayed investment, reduced bookings, supply chain uncertainty or the reputational cost of Tairāwhiti being seen as difficult to access.

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## Economic impact

Transport is an enabling input. Its cost and reliability influence production, sales, labour movement, tourism, essential goods, household wellbeing and investment decisions. Therefore, the cost of the closure is not limited to the transport sector or to the days when the road is fully closed. When freight and travel become more expensive or less reliable, the shock flows through the wider regional economy.

The Tairāwhiti economy is highly dependent on reliable physical access. Food and fibre production, horticulture, forestry, manufacturing, construction, tourism and rural services all rely on predictable road connections. Research prepared for Horticulture NZ estimates that Gisborne's horticultural production exceeds 120,000 tonnes, valued at approximately \$368m. A significant share of that produce moves through the Waioweka Gorge to Auckland and the Bay of Plenty. For perishable and seasonal products, delay is not just inconvenient; it can reduce quality, lead to missed export deadlines, increase spoilage risk and weaken customer confidence.

The only alternative major northbound freight route is via Napier and Taupo. For goods moving to Tauranga, the detour increases the route from 272 kilometres to more than 500 kilometres. Infometrics estimates that the additional travel cost of a full Waioweka Gorge closure is in the order of hundreds of thousands of dollars per day, with road-dependent tradeable GDP disrupted at around half a million dollars per day.

Tourism and hospitality are also highly exposed to access reliability. During the first six-week closure and recovery period, visitor spending in Tairāwhiti was about \$1.7m lower than in the same period the previous year. Tourism and hospitality rely heavily on the peak summer visitor period to sustain

themselves through the quieter winter months. With several weeks of revenue impacted, several businesses have reportedly already closed. The concern is not only the immediate reduction in visitor spend but also the risk that Tairāwhiti becomes seen as a destination that is difficult to reach. Once that perception takes hold, recovery takes longer than reopening the road.

Over time, this creates a market-access penalty for Tairāwhiti. Weaker or less reliable access effectively creates a distance tax. Customers may choose suppliers who can deliver with more certainty, visitors may choose destinations that are easier to reach, businesses face higher operating costs and investors may delay, scale back or redirect capital elsewhere.

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## Compounding layers of impact

1. Direct transport costs - longer detours, more fuel, more driver hours, vehicle wear, accommodation, missed delivery windows and lower truck utilisation.
2. Business disruption - delayed inputs, reduced sales, stock shortages, lower productivity, staff disruption, cancelled orders and weaker cashflow.
3. Market-access and confidence effects - customers, tourists, freight firms and investors begin to price Tairāwhiti as less reliable.
4. Long-run regional development risk - unreliable access constrains the same sectors Tairāwhiti is relying on for growth: higher-value primary production, manufacturing, tourism, construction, technology-enabled logistics and Māori economic development.

Unreliable access in and out of the region is a regional economic resilience issue, not just a temporary transport inconvenience. Businesses describe an interlinked pattern: freight becomes more expensive and less predictable, customers and visitors hesitate, supplies and materials are delayed, staff cannot work normally, and owners lose confidence in planning for the next season.

The clear risk is that customers, visitors, businesses and investors begin to plan around Tairāwhiti rather than in it.

# Impacts

## Direct detour costs and GDP disrupted

The closure creates a much larger economic impact than a simple increase in distance. Its effect is best understood through the full cost of transport, which includes extra kilometres, additional travel time, reduced reliability, driver-hour limits, accommodation costs, vehicle wear, inventory delays or spoilage, missed delivery penalties and the loss of customer confidence.

Infometrics prepared a rapid economic cost estimate for Trust Tairāwhiti on the cost to Gisborne when the Waioweka Gorge is closed. The estimate focuses on two measurable impacts: the additional travel costs created by detours, and the value of Gisborne's road-dependent tradeable GDP that is disrupted when the Gorge route is unavailable.

This estimate provides a quantified baseline for the direct transport impacts reported by businesses in the survey. It does not capture all wider impacts such as lost visitor confidence, delayed investment, reduced forward bookings, staff stress, supply-chain uncertainty, or the long-term reputational cost of Tairāwhiti being seen as difficult to access. It should therefore be read as a conservative estimate of direct and immediate economic pressure, rather than a complete estimate of total regional loss.

Route/item	Route description	Distance	Time	Estimated cost/impact
<b>Usual route</b>	Gisborne to Ōpōtiki via SH2 Waioweka Gorge, then to Tauranga	272 km	4.03 hrs	Baseline
<b>East Cape detour</b>	Gisborne to Hicks Bay, around SH35 East Cape, then to Tauranga	457 km	6.77 hrs	Approx. <b>\$417k per day</b> in additional travel costs across all vehicles
<b>Southern detour</b>	Gisborne to Napier via SH2, then Napier to Taupō via SH5, then to Tauranga	506 km	7.00 hrs	Approx. <b>\$482k per day</b> in additional travel costs across all vehicles
<b>Road-dependent tradeable GDP disrupted</b>	Estimate of Gisborne tradeable GDP that depends on road transport and is affected when the Gorge is closed	n/a	n/a	Approx. <b>\$24k per day</b> disrupted

Infometrics' modelling uses NZTA's Annual Average Daily Traffic data and Monetised Benefits and Costs Manual to estimate daily traffic volume, additional travel time costs and vehicle operating costs. It estimates that the additional travel cost of a Waioweka Gorge closure is approximately \$482k per day if traffic uses the southern detour via Napier and Taupō. Per-vehicle costs range from about \$260-\$293 per passenger car per day of closure, through to about \$870-\$1,042 per heavy commercial vehicle per day of closure.

Infometrics estimates that about \$526m of Gisborne's annual tradeable GDP is road-transport focused of which an estimated 36% travels north via Waioweka Gorge. On that basis, approximately \$524k per day of tradeable GDP is disrupted when the Gorge is closed. This should be treated as economic activity disrupted, not necessarily activity permanently lost, because some activity can still occur through detours but at a higher operating cost and with lower reliability.

## Temporary freight surcharge implementation and impacts

Two temporary freight surcharge approaches have been identified from engagements with businesses. One applies a 50% surcharge from 16 January 2026 to freight moving into and out of Gisborne to and from northern destinations, with removal tied to the full reopening of the northern route to heavy vehicles. Another applies \$40 per tonne or \$15 per cubic metre from 20 January 2026 to Auckland-Gisborne freight. These were applied as temporary cost-recovery measures rather than permanent pricing changes however they were in place for several months due to repeated short closures and ongoing uncertainty.

Freight providers spoken to identify additional distance, travel time, revised linehaul arrangements, equipment repositioning, driver accommodation and extended transit time as the reasoning for the surcharges. One notice indicates the revised route adds more than 200 kilometres and around 24 hours to some freight movements.

The surcharge effect is immediate and uneven. Businesses with high-volume or time-sensitive freight face higher costs, reduced margins and difficult choices about whether to absorb costs or pass them through to growers, customers and households. Inward freight for fuel, parts, chemicals, packaging, food ingredients and other essential inputs becomes more expensive, while outward freight for primary production and manufactured goods becomes less competitive. The commercial risk is that temporary charges become part of a wider perception that Tairāwhiti is costly and uncertain to service.

### Related survey responses:

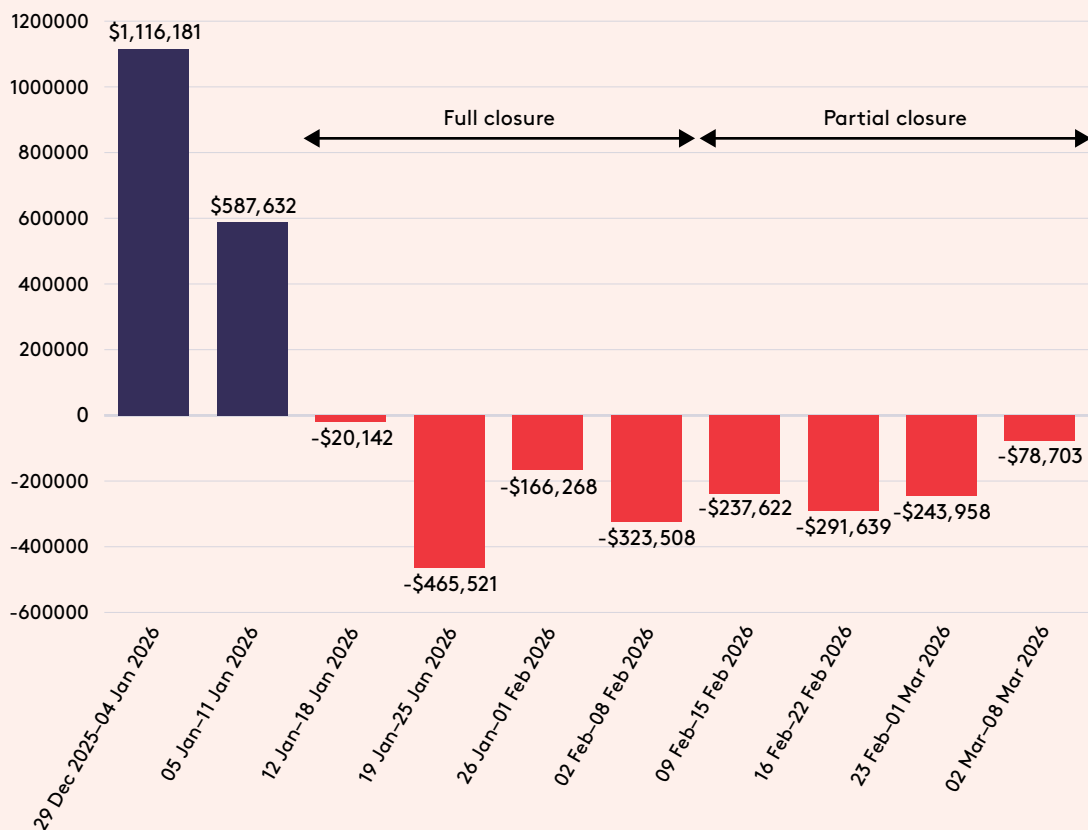
- **Retail respondent:** "Some, but not all, freight companies were adding extra levies on freight from Gisborne."
- **Trades respondent:** "Additional freight charges and longer wait time on materials needed for job flow were affecting urgent client work."

## Visitor spend impact

MarketView visitor credit card data indicates that the Waioweka Gorge closure and restricted convoy access coincided with a measurable short-term reduction in visitor spending in Tairāwhiti. Across the six weeks from week ending 25 January to week ending 1 March 2026, visitor spend was approximately \$1.7m lower than the same period in 2025. This represents a 16% reduction, or an average reduction of about \$283k per week.

Period	Road Status	2025 Visitor Spend	2026 Visitor Spend	Change \$	Change %
29 Dec 2025–04 Jan 2026	Open	\$4,778,194	\$5,894,374.43	\$1,116,181	23.4%
05 Jan–11 Jan 2026	Open	\$2,284,926	\$2,872,558.87	\$587,632	25.7%
12 Jan–18 Jan 2026	Full Closure	\$2,070,843	\$2,050,701.57	-\$20,142	-1.0%
19 Jan–25 Jan 2026	Full Closure	\$2,092,004	\$1,626,482.98	-\$465,521	-22.3%
26 Jan–01 Feb 2026	Full Closure	\$1,610,515	\$1,444,246.20	-\$166,268	-10.3%
02 Feb–08 Feb 2026	Full Closure	\$1,973,695	\$1,650,187.05	-\$323,508	-16.4%
09 Feb–15 Feb 2026	Partial Closure	\$1,719,936	\$1,482,313.53	-\$237,622	-13.8%
16 Feb–22 Feb 2026	Partial Closure	\$1,694,123	\$1,402,483.64	-\$291,639	-17.2%
23 Feb–01 Mar 2026	Partial Closure	\$1,713,838	\$1,469,879.96	-\$243,958	-14.2%
02 Mar–08 Mar 2026	Partial Closure	\$1,812,605	\$1,733,902.36	-\$78,703	-4.3%

Difference in Visitor Spend vs Previous Year



This timing is consistent with the business survey evidence that access uncertainty reduced visitor confidence and forward bookings across several months were cancelled.

The largest impacts were seen in visitor-facing sectors, particularly accommodation (-29%) and cafés, restaurants, bars and takeaway (-14%).

	Closed			Partially closed		
	19 Jan - 25 Jan	26 Jan - 1 Feb	2 Feb - 8 Feb	9 Feb - 15 Feb	16 Feb - 22 Feb	23 Feb - 1 Mar
<b>Accommodation</b>	-33.6%	-3.9%	-42.1%	-22.5%	-28.6%	-33.1%
<b>Apparel and Personal</b>	-25.4%	4.7%	-22.6%	-10.2%	-15.1%	-2.0%
<b>Cafes, Restaurants, Bars &amp; Takeaways</b>	-13.0%	-9.6%	-19.3%	-16.0%	-16.1%	-9.5%
<b>Department Stores and Leisure</b>	-11.9%	-9.2%	-5.4%	-10.5%	-12.6%	9.7%
<b>Fuel &amp; Automotive</b>	-15.7%	-28.3%	9.0%	-4.5%	-34.1%	-35.9%
<b>Groceries &amp; Liquor</b>	-21.5%	-15.3%	-14.1%	-16.2%	-14.4%	-12.3%
<b>Home, Hardware &amp; Electrical</b>	-15.5%	-6.8%	-20.2%	-6.8%	-11.0%	-3.3%
<b>Other Consumer Spending</b>	-39.6%	9.7%	-60.6%	24.4%	19.5%	101.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	-19.0%	-13.5%	-16.3%	-11.8%	-19.6%	-14.0%

Overall, the data suggests that the economic impact continued beyond the full closure itself. The lag in visitor spending after the road reopened points to the importance of travel confidence, reliable access and clear communications for tourism and hospitality recovery.

Among tourism-related respondents, booking impacts were widespread. Of the 25 tourism respondents, 16 reported significant booking impacts, and five reported moderate impacts. More than half also reported a major long-term impact on visitor confidence, showing that the road disruption affected both immediate bookings and future demand.

# Business survey responses

The table below summarises the main impacts reported by 69 respondents who confirmed they were impacted by the Waioweka Gorge. It shows widespread effects on revenue, costs, staffing, freight and supply, with tourism respondents also reporting strong impacts on bookings, visitor confidence, and product delivery.

Category	Result / Count	Percentage
Reported a weekly revenue impact	64	92.8%
Expected impacts to continue into future months or seasons	60	87.0%
Reported a weekly cost impact	51	73.9%
Reported staffing, hours, or employment effects	48	69.6%
Reported freight, supply or booking disruptions	58	84.1%

## Freight, supply chains and essential goods

Supply-chain disruption is one of the strongest survey signals. Fifty-eight respondents reported freight, supply or booking disruptions, and free-text responses repeatedly mention freight, couriers, trucking, supplies, stock, materials, perishables, primary production and market access. The commercial impact is broader than freight surcharges: missed delivery windows can delay orders, reduce service reliability, damage customer relationships and affect export or harvest commitments.

The gorge closure creates a compound freight problem: longer routes, fewer available trucks, tighter driver-hour constraints, disrupted receival windows and additional per-load or per-tonne costs. Some businesses describe freight volumes falling sharply because carriers cannot maintain normal schedules, while others report containers or input deliveries being held until the reopening timeframe is clearer. The impact also affects production schedules, storage capacity, cashflow and the reliability of Tairāwhiti supply into northern markets.

### Related survey responses:

- **Animal-feed supplier:** "Normally we send 5 to 10 full units per day" but the week following the closure we only sent five for the whole week, affecting supply agreements with farms that rely on constant feed supply."
- **Food producer:** "Our products are now spending hours longer in trucks thus impacting the overall quality of the product and the price of trucking has gone up since the recent gorge closure."
- **Construction/trades respondent:** "If we don't get freight in time, it can stop the whole job, resulting in holdups."
- **Transport/contracting respondent:** "We have daily transport runs out of the district, and the closure created havoc for us logistically in having to go via Hawke's Bay instead. Backloads were less efficient, and costs increased."

- **Bulk transport operator:** "We cart product out of Gisborne 6 days a week, so we rely on SH2 to remain open. The closure added costs to clients, caused drivers to run out of driving hours, and required accommodation."
- **Timber/manufacturing exporter:** "We have a two-day delivery window" for port-side delivery, but extra transport time and reduced truck availability caused missed shipping bookings and delayed or cancelled customer orders."

## Seasonal production and time-sensitive activity

Several affected activities are seasonal or time-sensitive, including harvesting, planting preparation, essential food ingredients, animal feed, packaging, fuel, parts and other production inputs. Delays or higher freight costs can quickly become service-continuity issues, particularly where businesses supply essential goods or support primary production beyond Tairāwhiti.

This timing risk is heightened because two of Gisborne's major horticultural crop harvest periods - kiwifruit and apples - generally run between February and July each year, adding pressure to any closure or restricted access during that period.

Infometrics and EC Consult's January 2026 horticulture supply-chain report reinforces this risk. The report estimates Gisborne Region horticultural production at 121,681 tonnes, worth \$368m. Of this, 43,130 tonnes of produce worth \$112m is transported to Auckland and Bay of Plenty via the Waioweka Gorge.

It also notes that product-group responses identified "road closures from extreme weather events" as a supply-chain threat, and that alternative options can increase perishability risk and reduce returns.

### Related survey responses:

- **Horticultural transport contractor:** "Harvest was due to begin in late February, and routing via Napier would turn trips north into longer than one day, potentially leaving fruit on the vine until trucks were available."
- **Food/farm retail respondent:** "Packaging costs are going up due to increased transport costs and contracts outside the region may be impacted or possibly cancelled" if customers do not accept new transport quotes."
- **Beekeeping/primary production respondent:** "Without access to sites we are unable to get honey off hives or get treatment to hives and if treatment cannot occur in time, we risk hive collapse and the hive dies."

## Workforce access and regional service delivery

A total of 48 respondents (70%) reported staffing, hours or employment impacts. Businesses describe reduced hours, stood-down staff, delayed seasonal hiring, inability to open, reduced service delivery and additional pressure on experienced workers. Workforce effects also reduce community access to services and can accelerate the loss of capability from sectors where skills are already difficult to replace.

### Related survey responses:

- **Training/hospitality respondent:** "Have not been able to open and offer work to a number of staff."

- **Tourism/hospitality respondent:** "We have had to reduce staffing hours by a third."
- **Hospitality respondent:** "We are already looking at having to let go two staff, one of which has been with us for the past 10 years."
- **Rural service/retail provider:** "No through traffic calling in. Supplies ceased and staff from [a rural settlement] had to return home and [were] unable to return to work the next day due to road uncertainty."
- **Bulk transport operator:** "Drivers cannot get back to load up each day, running out of driving hours, cost of accommodation. And are not able to get home to their families each night."

## Visitor demand, customer confidence and market access

Customer and market confidence effects are difficult to quantify but are commercially important. Survey responses and correspondence show that access uncertainty is influencing whether customers, visitors and potential investors are willing to travel to, buy from or rely on Tairāwhiti. Once customers and visitors perceive the region as unreliable or risky to access, demand can remain weak beyond the physical closure period.

### Related survey responses:

- **Accommodation provider:** "February occupancy is currently down 31% compared with the same period last year" because visitors were uncertain about travelling with only one main access road open.
- **Retail respondent:** "Our sales decreased sharply from the day of closure and the following week saw a 37.5% decrease from the prior week."
- **Accommodation provider:** "International tourists will leave Gisborne off as a destination and domestic holiday makers will choose a more reliable destination."
- **Tourism activity operator:** "Visitors are cautious about booking travel to Gisborne because access may be disrupted again at short notice, and tourists may choose destinations perceived as more reliable and accessible."
- **Tourism activity operator:** "The ongoing uncertainty caused by repeated weather events also takes a mental toll and makes it extremely difficult to stay motivated and keep the business going."

## Regional economic activity, productivity and confidence

Revenue and cost impacts are widespread. Sixty-four respondents selected a weekly revenue impact band and 51 selected a weekly cost impact band. Using simple midpoint assumptions, the workbook indicates approximately \$490k in weekly revenue impact and \$292k in weekly cost impact across the 69 respondents. These should be treated as indicative only, not audited regional losses.

The stronger economic signal is confidence. Customers, visitors and investors become cautious when they cannot rely on access. This matters because confidence affects future orders, bookings, hiring, capital investment and regional reputation.

#### Related survey response:

- **Animal-feed supplier:** "A full truck and trailer was estimated at \$6250, with normal movement of 5 to 10 a day which reduced sharply after the closure, creating a large weekly revenue impact."

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## Investment and long-run development risk

The most important strategic finding is that unreliable access appears to be shifting from an operational problem into an economic-development constraint. If freight companies, contractors, visitors, customers and investors cannot rely on access, the region's ability to grow higher-value sectors, retain local value, support tourism, unlock land-use potential and attract investment is weakened.

#### Related survey responses:

- **High-value horticulture respondent:** "Potential investors were reviewing their planned investments into the Tairāwhiti region because being unable to move harvested product daily puts their whole investment strategy at risk. Customer visits and supply agreements were also delayed due to uncertainty about getting harvested product to packhouses."
- **Beekeeping/primary production respondent:** "With such disruption being a regular occurrence, I am reluctant to invest any further in our Gisborne operations. The business had started already growing outside the region."
- **Civil engineering/professional services respondent:** "As a region, we are starting to become very isolated, which will impact new businesses looking at investing here."

# Strategic and wellbeing implications

The closure affects all four wellbeing dimensions in the Tairāwhiti Economic Plan - Whakakitenga, He Huarahi Whai Oranga. This follows from the economic impacts: higher transport costs, lower reliability, disrupted work, weaker visitor demand and reduced confidence place pressure on households, businesses and communities.

Pou	Economic/wellbeing impact
<b>Ōhanga — diversified economy</b>	Weakens logistics, tourism, primary production, construction and investment confidence
<b>Tāngata — resilient communities</b>	Increases isolation, stress, staffing disruption and access uncertainty
<b>Ōranga — people achieving ambitions</b>	Disrupts employment, training, business growth and household income
<b>Taiao — thriving environment</b>	Longer detours increase fuel use and emissions, while weather-related slips highlight climate and land-resilience risks

The strategic risk is that unreliable access constrains the sectors Tairāwhiti relies on for future growth. This includes higher-value primary production, manufacturing, tourism, construction, technology-enabled logistics and Māori economic development. The impact is not only the cost of the current closure but also the possibility that customers, freight providers, visitors and investors begin to treat Tairāwhiti as a harder and less reliable place to service.

## Conclusion

The evidence gathered through the Trust Tairāwhiti business survey, local intelligence, surcharge evidence, Infometrics modelling and visitor-spend data shows that disruption to the Waioweka Gorge/SH2 is placing real pressure on businesses, communities and regional confidence.

The impacts extend beyond immediate travel delays. They affect freight reliability, visitor spend, staffing, supply chains, investment decisions and the region's wider economic resilience. The strongest conclusion is that Waioweka Gorge reliability should be treated as a regional economic resilience priority, not only a roading maintenance issue.

Targeted infrastructure investment is critical to secure reliable access through the Waioweka Gorge and protect the region's ability to trade, grow, attract visitors and support community wellbeing.



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