An aerial photograph of a road winding through a forest. On the left side of the road, there is a large, light-colored rock slide that has partially covered the road and surrounding area. The trees are in various shades of green and yellow, suggesting an autumn setting. The overall scene is somewhat hazy, giving it a historical or archival feel.

**Crisis Communications Through Better Research:
*Lessons Learned from the North Carolina Rock Slide***

Travel & Tourism Research Association Annual Conference

June 20, 2011

London, Ontario, Canada

Marlise Taylor, Director of Research, North Carolina Division of Tourism







Alternate Routes - I40 Rock Slide - North Carolina - Internet Explorer provided by Dell

http://www.greatsmokies.com/alternate-routes.html

nc rockslide

TRAVEL GUIDE TO BRYSON CITY AND THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

BRYSON CITY NORTH CAROLINA

Alternate Routes

I-40 ROCK SLIDE PHOTO COURTESY TENNESSEE DOT

Where to Stay | Things to Do | Places to Visit | Restaurants | Shopping | Entertainment | Plan Your Visit | Businesses

DRIVING TO THE SMOKIES

Rock Slides Have Temporarily Closed Two Roads Into The NC Smokies, But You Can Take These Alternate Routes.

I-40 Update: NC DOT reports I-40 will open Tuesday, April 27.

Due to the October 25 rockslide at the Tennessee-North Carolina border, I-40 through the Pigeon River Gorge will be closed until late April according to the NC Dept. of Transportation.

Due to a March 24 rockslide, a 13-mile section of US 129 in Tennessee is closed

From Virginia | From Knoxville | From Nashville

OPTION 1, through Asheville: Driving south on Interstate 81, take Interstate 26 (Exit 57A) east to Asheville. At exit 31B, take Interstate 40 west to US 74 (exit 27) – the Great Smoky Mountains Expressway. Follow US 74 past Waynesville and Sylva to Cherokee (exit 74) and Bryson City (exit 67).

OPTION 2, through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Drive south on Interstate 81 until it merges into Interstate 40. Continue WEST on I-40 to TN-66 (exit 407). Drive south to Sevierville where you'll pick up US 441 South. Continue south on US 441 through Gatlinburg and into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and on to Cherokee, NC.

From Cherokee, there are two short routes to Bryson City: (1) the two-lane US 19 West, or (2) you can continue south on US 441 to US 74 west. Continue on US 74 to Bryson City (exit 67).

Note: US 441 through the National Park reaches an elevation of 5000 feet at Newfound Gap. For current updates of weather related road closings in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park please call (865) 436-1200. Once you hear a voice, dial extension 631 for road information or extension 630 for a weather forecast. Please be aware that road openings/closings may change throughout the day.

Internet | Protected Mode: Off

Asheville: I-40 Rockslide Map, Travel Advisory | Ask Asheville Blog - Internet Explorer provided by Dell

http://blog.askasheville.com/asheville/asheville-i-40-rockslide-map-travel-advisory

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Asheville: I-40 Rockslide Map, Travel Advisory

Permanent Link to Asheville: I-40 Rockslide Map, Travel Advisory

Due to the recent Rockslide between Asheville and Tennessee on I-40, the Chamber's Visitors Bureau has sent some maps over to AskAsheville to share online with our friends and followers. We want to all make sure that people traveling know which direction to head in to avoid any further complications. Thanks.

I-40 Travel Advisory

http://blog.askasheville.com/asheville/asheville-i-40-rockslide-map-travel-advisory

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Visit North Carolina: I-40 Rockslide Update - Internet Explorer provided by Dell

http://visitnorthcarolina.blogspot.com/2010/01/i-40-rockslide-update.html

nc rockslide

Visit North Carolina

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2010

I-40 Rockslide Update

Crews working on the Interstate 40 rock slide are hoping to

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the *Visit North Carolina* blog. Here, you'll find regular updates on events, attractions, and other items of interest in North Carolina, from the mountains to the sea. If you have a suggestion or possible item of interest for this blog, please feel free to e-mail us at blogger@visitnc.com. Thanks... and be sure to check back often!

Monthly NC Sweepstakes

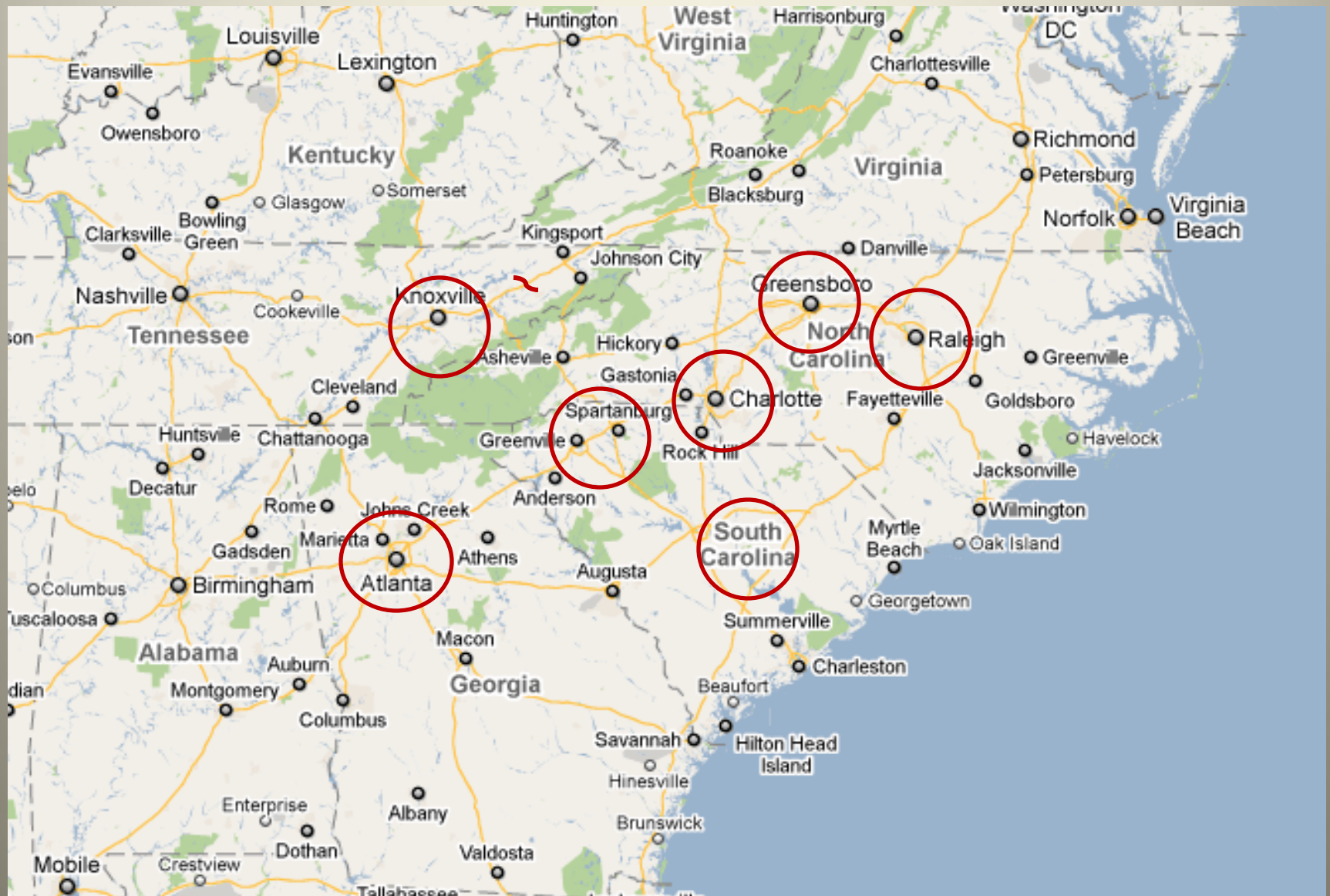
Currituck Outer Banks BEACH & GOLF

Done

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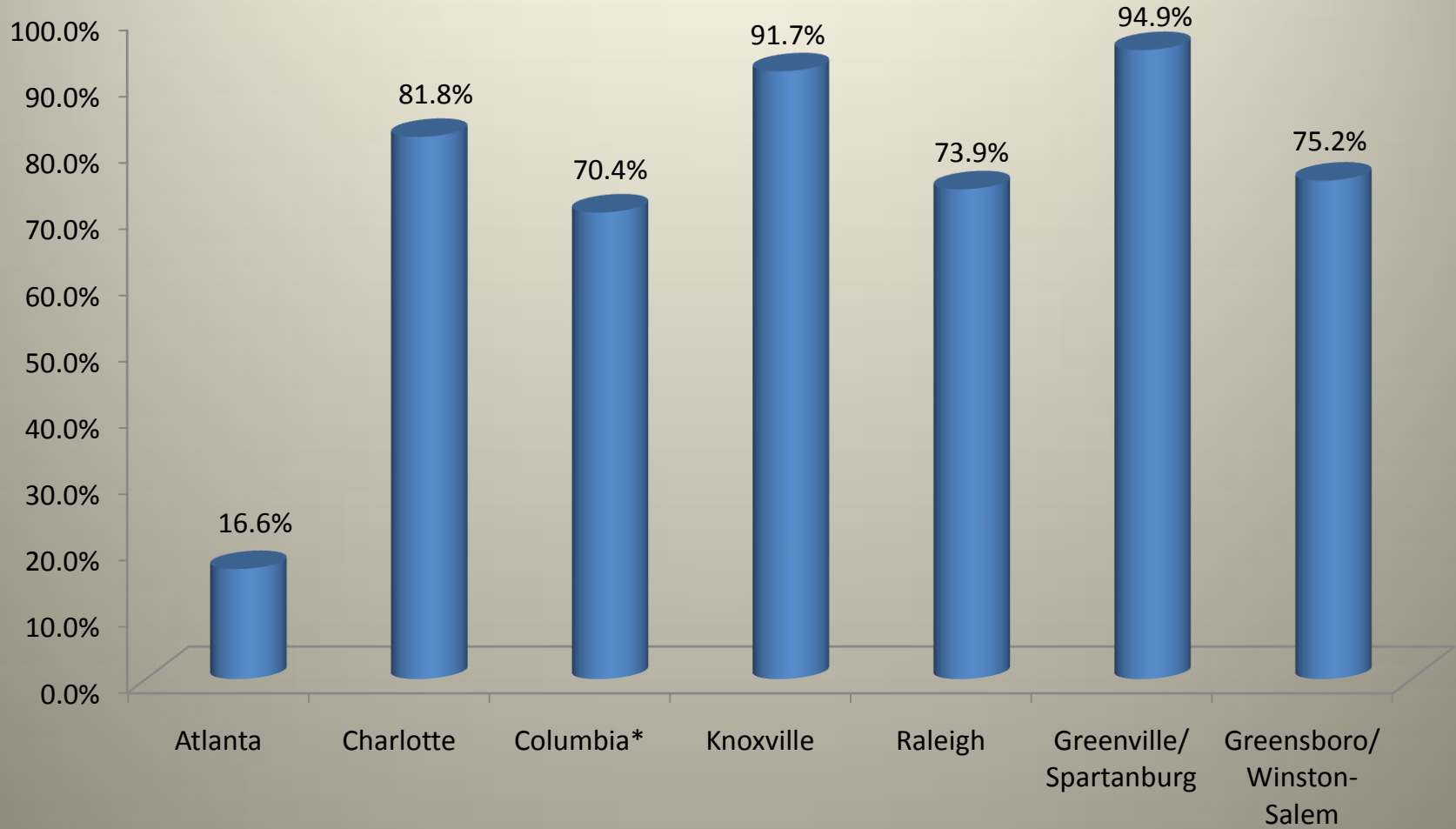
The Research



All Markets

- 65% of all respondents were aware of the rock slide and 82% were correct with regards to the location.
- 38% of respondents agreed that the rock slide would be a major inconvenience and that it would be difficult to get to their destination.
- 44% of respondents agreed that the rock slide would create traffic and 46% agreed that it would require an alternate route.
- 40% of respondents indicated that the rock slide would have no impact on their travel plans.
- With confirmation of the specific location of the rock slide, 82% of respondents responded that they were no more or less likely to visit the North Carolina mountains in the next six months.

Awareness of Rock Slide by Market



* denotes small sample size

Correct knowledge of rock slide location

- Of the 16.5% of Atlanta respondents who were aware of the rock slide, 66.7% of them knew the correct location of the slide, while twenty-one percent were not sure.
- All other markets had a higher proportion of respondents who correctly knew the location of the rock slide
 - Charlotte – 87.4%
 - Columbia* – 73.7% (*small sample size)
 - Knoxville – 83.1%
 - Raleigh – 80.6%
 - Greenville/Spartanburg – 86.0%
 - Greensboro/Winston-Salem – 81.3%

Perception of impact of rock slide on future travel to North Carolina mountains

– Major inconvenience?

- Knoxville respondents agreed most strongly that the rock slide would be a major inconvenience to them (70.3%), while Atlanta respondents were unsure (47.0%) as to whether it would be an inconvenience. This is most likely due to the lack of awareness overall in this market.
- About 40% of respondents in the Raleigh, Greenville/Spartanburg, and Greensboro/Winston-Salem markets agreed that the rock slide would be a major inconvenience.

– Alternate route?

- The Knoxville market had the highest proportion of respondents (84.5%) who indicated that the rock slide would cause them to find an alternate route to the North Carolina mountains...they were mostly correct!
- Just over half of the respondents (50.7%) from the Greenville/Spartanburg market and just less than half of the Greensboro/Winston-Salem market believed that the rock slide would require them to take an alternate route, while 32% of Atlanta respondents indicated the same.

– More difficult to get to destination?

- Almost three-fourths of Knoxville respondents believed that the rock slide would make it more difficult to get to their North Carolina destination, while only 26.1% of Atlanta respondents believed this.
- Just over a third of Charlotte (34.5%) and Raleigh (39.9%) respondents responded that the rock slide would cause difficulty getting to their destination.
- A slightly higher proportion of Greensboro/Winston-Salem (41.3%) and Greenville/Spartanburg (41.9%) responded similarly.

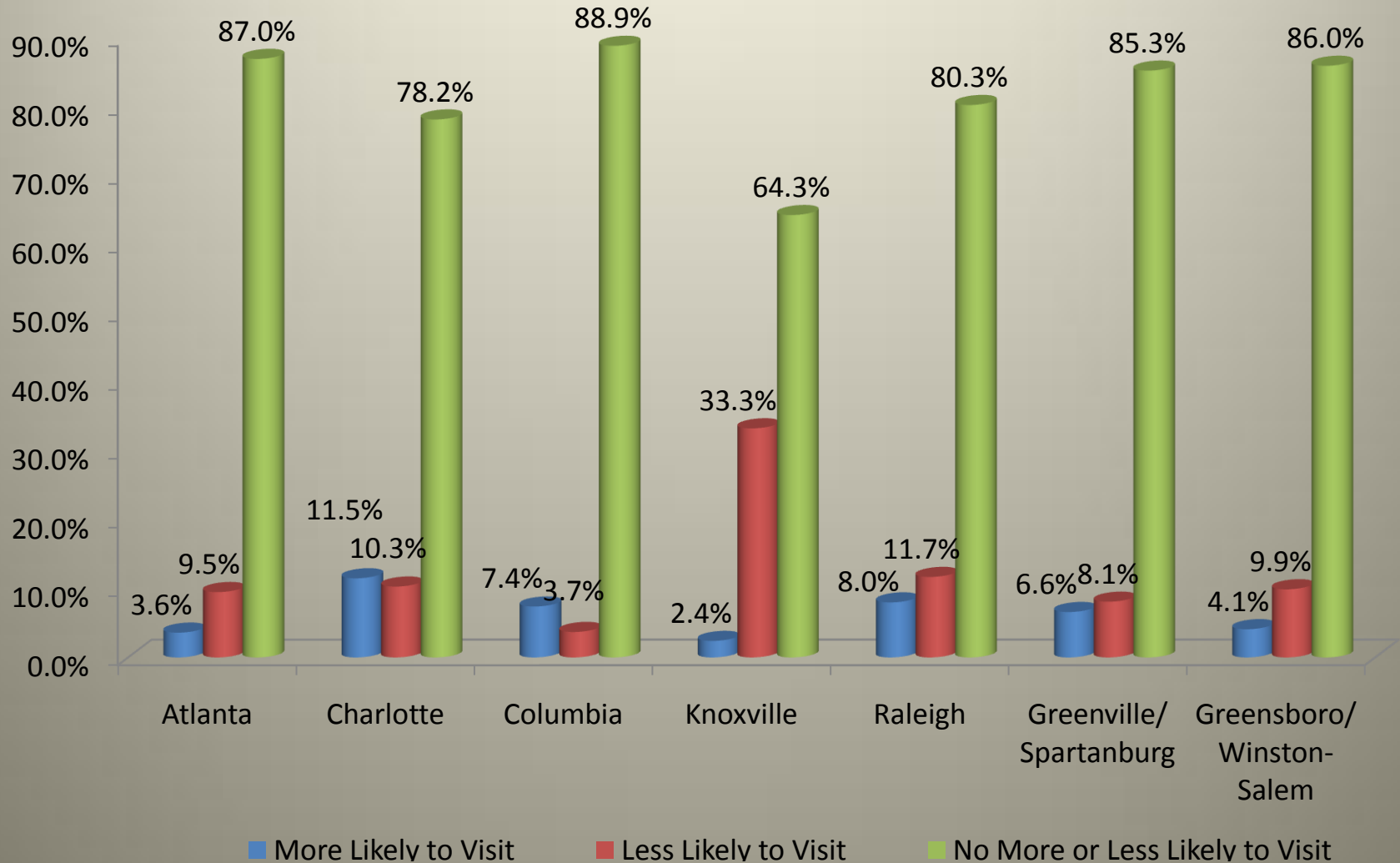
– Traffic or delays as a result of rock slide?

- Despite knowing the exact location of the rock slide, twenty-nine percent of respondents in eastern markets (excluding Atlanta) expected that the rock slide would cause delays and other traffic on their normal or alternate route to the North Carolina mountains.
- Over seventy percent of Knoxville respondents agreed that the rock slide would cause traffic and delays on their route to the mountains.

– No impact on travel?

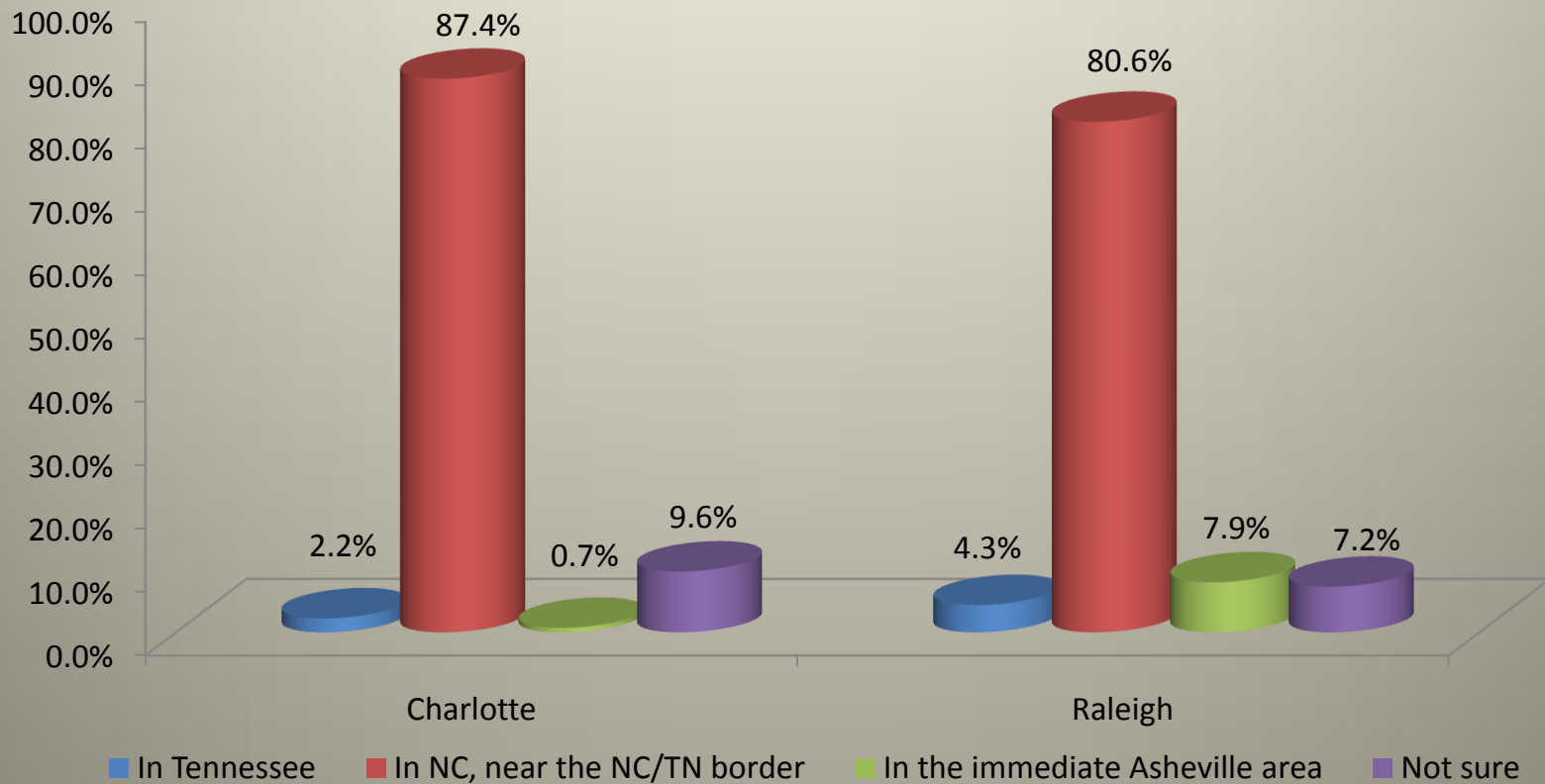
- Almost one-third (32.1%) of eastern markets agreed that the rock slide would have no impact on their travel.

Based on confirmation of the rock slide location, how has your likelihood to visit in the next 6 months changed?



Comparison of Raleigh and Charlotte markets

Based on your knowledge of the rock slide, where is the rock slide located?

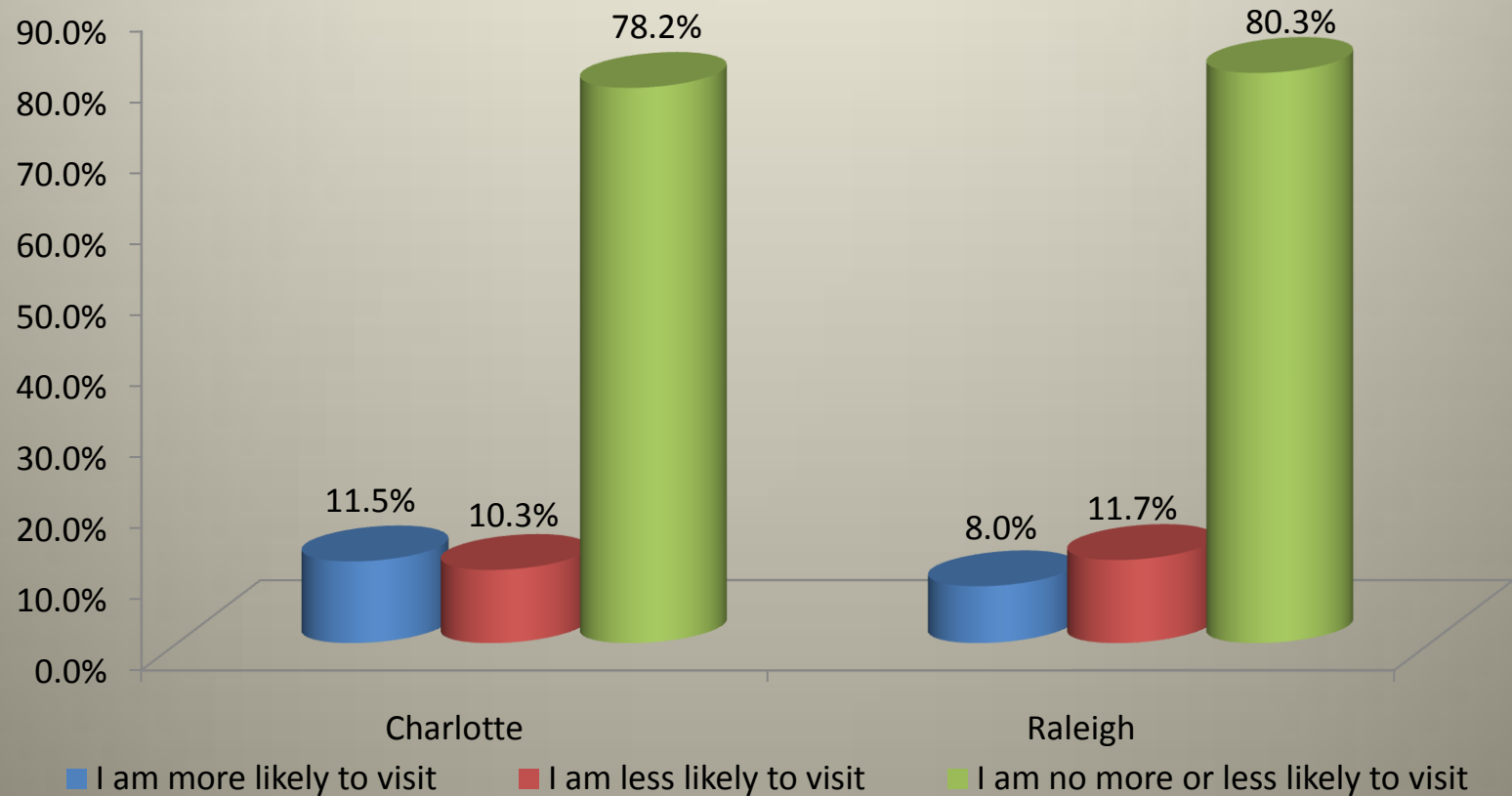


* The differences between markets for this data is statistically significant.

Perceptions of How Travel Will be Affected

- The rock slide would be a major inconvenience
 - Raleigh 39.9%
 - Charlotte 35.1%
- The rock slide would require an alternate route
 - Raleigh 45.8%
 - Charlotte 38.0%
- The rock slide would make it more difficult to get to destination
 - Raleigh 39.9%
 - Charlotte 44.3%
- The rock slide would create traffic or delays
 - Raleigh 46.3%
 - Charlotte 44.3%
- The rock slide would have no impact on my plans
 - Raleigh 40.4%
 - Charlotte 49.1%

Based on confirmation of the rock slide location, how has your likelihood to visit in the next 6 months changed?



Test Messaging

Eastern Markets

- *The North Carolina mountains are as close as ever.*
- ***Getting to the North Carolina mountains is easy. It's leaving that's hard.***
- *Happy Holidays. Your visit to North Carolina's mountains does not require a detour.*
- *There's no rock between you and your escape to North Carolina's mountains.*

Knoxville Market

- *How do you get around a rock slide? Any number of ways.*
- *Even with a rock slide, the North Carolina mountains are just as easy to get to.*
- ***Don't let a little rock slide stand between you and a great getaway.***
- *One road is closed, but the rest are open.*

Research in Crisis Planning is Crucial

 [I-40 and US 64 Info For Travel From Tennessee](#)

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I-40 and US 64 Info For Travel From Tennessee

Posted: Feb 11, 2010

I-40 Info For Travel From Tennessee

UPDATED: Thursday, Feb. 11 at 9 a.m.

Seasonal activities are happening throughout North Carolina, and all areas of the state are accessible for trips to the mountains, piedmont or coast despite the rockslide that has caused a detour on Interstate 40 near the North Carolina/Tennessee state line. The detour does not impact access to the Blue Ridge Parkway, nor travel to any destinations in North Carolina except directly from Tennessee.

For information on current road conditions, visitors should check the North Carolina Department of Transportation Traveler Information Management System website at www.ncdot.gov/traffictravel/ or call 511, the state's free travel information line. NCDOT information can also be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ncdot>.

For more details, go to: http://media.visitnc.com/news/605/15/US-321-Re-Opens-After-Rock-Slide-Offering-Full-Access-to-North-Carolina-s-Ski-and-Snow-Season/d,newsitem_latest_news.html



[Download the I-40 detour map \(.pdf\)](#)



NCDOT

twitter

Rockslide I-40 Detour to Cherokee <http://bit.ly/2VRuc2>
5:59 PM Oct 27th, 2009 via Facebook



VisitNC

Rockslide I-40 Detour to Cherokee <http://bit.ly/2VRuc2>
5:59 PM Oct 27th, 2009 via Facebook



Results?

- Lodging data for Western NC during time of I-40 closure
 - December 2009 occupancy +5.4%
 - January 2010 occupancy -2.4%
 - February 2010 occupancy +3.9%
 - March 2010 occupancy +2.3%
 - April 2010 occupancy +7.6%
- Other anecdotal results obtained
 - Greater lack of general geography knowledge the further away the market from the site

Conclusion

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

I-40 has reopened through the North Carolina mountains.

The detour has ended. Travelers can head east and west once again on I-40 through the Great Smoky Mountains.

Two eastbound lanes and one westbound lane are now OPEN and BACK IN BUSINESS!

As NCDOT continues to make road safety improvements:

- One westbound lane of I-40 will be closed for a few miles
- On some Sunday mornings, traffic may be stopped for about thirty minutes.
- For updates call 511 or visit www.ncdot.gov/traffic

