

## Future of the Region Conference

by Katrina Maksimuk



As a follow up to the biannual State of the Region Report, VCCA held its inaugural Future of the Region Conference on May 23 at the Oxnard Marriott featuring three keynote speakers talking about trends they are seeing as a threat and opportunistic solutions they are applying in their region. The keynotes provided rich,

forward-thinking information focusing on transportation, public health and technology to a group of over 150 regional leaders from across several business sectors.

Dr. Joshua L. Schank, Chief Innovation Officer at the Office of Extraordinary Innovation for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, discussed how their department has implemented an open submission of ideas through their website. Ideas that are chosen are then put out to bid or implemented internally by department staff. Some creative solutions have included using drones to inspect miles of track that was previously done by walking the tracks, Micro-transit, and buses with devices that tell bus drivers exactly the speed to drive to get the most green lights.



Offering statistical details, Dr. Beatriz Solis, Program Director, Healthy Communities, California Endowment noted that 80 percent of what influences your life expectancy happens outside of the health care system: transportation, housing, job opportunities, racism and other social factors. One concerning study indicated that stress is impacting kids in disadvantaged communities more than PTSD impacts vets. Seeing firsthand that investment has enormous impacts, Dr. Solis emphasized that we must increase the opportunities for youth.



Dr. Sundar Sundareswaran, Vice President at Teledyne Scientific, talked about the importance of having a pipeline of graduating students from nearby universities and their management's desire to increase the internship opportunities at the company.

Following Dr. Sundareswaran, the local perspective was presented by a panel of area leaders. Panelists included Dr. Jamshid Damooei, Professor and Chair, Economics, Finance & Accounting at the California Lutheran University; Joseph Briglio, Regional Affairs Officer and Project Manager of Southern California Association of Governments; Erick Went, co-founder Matter Labs, Technology Entrepreneur and Startup Investor; and Dr. Suzanne Fussell, Family Practice Physician and Board Member at St. John's Healthcare Foundation. The conference discussion on planning livable communities in the future was eye-opening as to how many factors go into a truly sustainable community with a high quality of life.

