PURPOSE: In order to protect and reassure people who use public transportation it is first wise to understand who are targeted as victims of crime and, if possible, why these people are targeted. Determining the risk of being a victim on various modes of transport is though challenging, due to there being no robust baseline on which to base calculations. Here we present a method which estimates the victimisation *rate* of the travelling population. A rate transforms data into an intelligible form, so that the risk of victimisation can be estimated.

Ascertaining which groups of people suffer disproportionately from victimisation of particular crime types is the first step in a problem-solving process such as SARA (see Figure 1 which illustrates the iterative nature of problem-solving). The method presented here therefore acts as a 'scanning' technique which identifies and begins to quantify concentrations of victimisation. This forms a basis on which hypotheses can be generated (e.g. why does *this* group suffer disproportionately from *x* crime type?). Testing hypotheses generates new knowledge about a problem and feeds into intelligent response formulation.
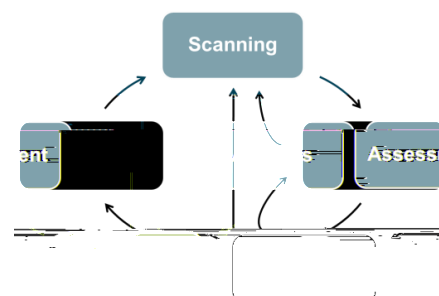

Figure 1 – the SARA problem-solving process

THEORY: One of the most influential theories relating to crime occurrence is the routine activity approach. This states that crime is a product of a motivated offender coming into contact with a suitable target (victim) in the absence of a capable guardian. How social life is organised determines the frequency and timing of these interactions between victims and offenders.

It has been known for many decades that not all targets are at equal risk of becoming a victim of crime. Some people are, by virtue of their socio-demographic qualities or lifestyle choices, more vulnerable to being selected by offenders. Some buildings and other properties have characteristics that make them more attractive to offenders than others. Identifying those people and products who are more likely to be targeted by offenders is a worthwhile exercise, because protecting them offers good prospects for crime prevention.

A victim's routine activities can be particularly telling in explaining when and where they become vulnerable to crime. Marcus Felson – the creator of the routine activity approach - once famously said that "Just as lions look for deer near their watering hole, criminal offenders disproportionately find victims in certain settings or high-risk occupations". It is important to profile the victim population so that we understand what these high-risk settings or socio-demographic characteristics are. We can then align crime reduction resources accordingly so that the risk of victimisation is minimised.

Rational choice theory has commonly been employed to explain how offenders select their targets. This approach states that offender decisions are often characterised by at least limited rationality. Cost-benefit analysis guides each stage of the offending decision-making process so that rewards are maximised and risks are minimised. Each specific crime will dictate what victim characteristics are important. For example, street robbers favour victims who are easy to subdue, either through their physical stature (e.g. affected by age or physical ability) or because they are somewhat distracted at the point of victimisation.