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Alliance plans to protest FTAA negotiations

Starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, a group that calls itself Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment said it will march from the Seattle Labor Temple to the city's Pier 62 where they will hold a rally at 11 a.m. to oppose the creation of the Free Trade of Americas Areas (FTAA).

Miami is among the cities working to house the administration for the proposed free trade zone.

The group said it, along with United Steelworkers District 7 and District 11, is using the Seattle march and rally as a send-off for a 15-state "March-to-Miami" tour aboard a bio-diesel bus, "The Blue-Green Machine."

U.S. trade officials are scheduled to meet in Miami Nov. 20-21 to propose rules for the creation of the FTAA. As proposed, the FTAA would be the world's largest free trade area, but the groups planning to protest the alliance claim they stopped other free trade agreements, including Fast Track trade negotiating in 1997 and 1998 and a proposed expansion of NAFTA.

"The itinerary calls for reaching Florida in time for a final 60-mile walk into Miami and a mass rally against FTAA during the trade officials' meeting," the group said.

Dan Leahy, director of the alliance, said the march to Miami begins in Seattle because the World Trade Organization protests in 1999 revealed a new political power arising from creative young environmentalists and rank-and-file union members acting together.

Events planned on the March-to-Miami bus tour include classes, teach-ins, marches, rallies, signature gathering, demonstrations, press briefings and visits to state legislators, the group said.

"Unity is our winning strategy," said Bill Carey, United Steelworkers staff member and co-chair of the alliance. "Together, we can defeat the FTAA."