

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Release No. 34-87357; File No. SR-LTSE-2019-03

October 18, 2019

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Long-Term Stock Exchange; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Set the Date of the Pilot Related to the Market-Wide Circuit Breaker in Rule 11.280 and to Move the Limit Up-Limit Down Mechanism, Authority to Initiate Trading Halts, and Procedure for Initiating and Terminating a Trading Halt into Separate Rules for Clarity

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the “Act”)¹, and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on October 18, 2019, Long-Term Stock Exchange (“LTSE” or the “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I and II below, which Items have been prepared by the self-regulatory organization. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

LTSE proposes to untie the effectiveness of the market-wide circuit breaker (“MWCB”) mechanism in Rule 11.280 from that of the Plan to Address Extraordinary Market Volatility Pursuant to Rule 608 of Regulation NMS (the “LULD Plan”) and to extend the MWCB pilot’s effectiveness to the close of business on October 18, 2020. LTSE has designated this rule change as “non-controversial under Section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act”³ and provided the Commission with the notice required by Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.⁴

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

³ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

⁴ 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

The text of the proposed rule change is available at the Exchange’s website at <https://longtermstockexchange.com/>, at the principal office of the Exchange, and at the Commission’s Public Reference Room.

II. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement on the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, the self-regulatory organization included statements concerning the purpose of and basis for the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. The self-regulatory organization has prepared summaries, set forth in Sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement on the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

Paragraphs (a) through (d) and (f) of Rule 11.280 describe the methodology for determining when to halt trading in all stocks due to extraordinary market volatility (*i.e.*, market-wide circuit breakers). The MWCB mechanism under Rule 11.280 was approved by the Commission to operate on a pilot basis, the term of which was to coincide with the pilot period for the Plan to Address Extraordinary Market Volatility Pursuant to Rule 608 of Regulation NMS (the “LULD Plan”),⁵ including any extensions to the pilot period for the LULD Plan. The Commission recently approved an amendment to the LULD Plan for it to operate on a permanent, rather than pilot, basis.⁶ The Exchange proposes to amend Rule 11.280 to untie the pilot’s effectiveness from that of the LULD Plan and to extend the pilot’s effectiveness to the

⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 67091 (May 31, 2012), 77 FR 33498 (June 6, 2012).

⁶ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 85623 (April 11, 2019), 84 FR 16086 (April 17, 2019) (“LULD Plan Amendment 18 Approval Order”).

close of business on October 18, 2020. The Exchange does not propose any additional changes to Rule 11.280, other than to move the LULD provisions and regulatory trading halt provisions in paragraph (e), and paragraphs (g) and (h), of Rule 11.280, respectively, to separate rules for clarity.

Specifically, the Exchange proposes to move Rule 11.280(e) (“Limit Up-Limit Down Mechanism”) to new Rule 11.281, keep Rule 11.280(f) within Rule 11.280 by renumbering it as Rule 11.280(e), and move Rule 11.280(g) (“Authority to Initiate Trading Halts”) and Rule 11.280(h) (“Procedure for Initiating and Terminating a Trading Halt”) to new Rule 11.282. Cross-references to these provisions in the LTSE rulebook – contained in Rules 11.230, 11.350, 14.001, and 14.210, and the supplementary material to Rule 14.207 – would be updated accordingly.

MWCBs under Rule 11.280 provide an important, automatic mechanism that is invoked to promote stability and investor confidence during a period of significant stress when securities markets experience extreme broad-based declines. All U.S. equity exchanges have rules relating to MWCBs, which are designed to slow the effects of extreme price movement through coordinated trading halts across securities markets when severe price declines reach levels that may exhaust market liquidity. MWCBs provide for trading halts in all equities and options markets during a severe market decline as measured by a single-day decline in the S&P 500 Index.

Pursuant to Rule 11.280, a market-wide trading halt will be triggered if the S&P 500 Index declines in price by specified percentages from the prior day’s closing price of that index. Currently, the triggers are set at three circuit breaker thresholds: 7% (Level 1), 13% (Level 2) and 20% (Level 3). A market decline that triggers a Level 1 or Level 2 circuit breaker after 9:30

a.m. ET and before 3:25 p.m. ET would halt market-wide trading for 15 minutes, while a similar market decline at or after 3:25 p.m. ET would not halt market-wide trading. A market decline that triggers a Level 3 circuit breaker, at any time during the trading day, would halt market-wide trading for the remainder of the trading day.

The Exchange will use the MWCB pilot extension period to develop with the other self-regulatory organizations (“SROs”) rules and procedures that would allow for the periodic testing of the performance of the MWCB mechanism, with industry member participation in such testing. The extension will also permit the SROs to consider enhancements to the MWCB processes such as modifications to the Level 3 process.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,⁷ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,⁸ in particular, in that it is designed to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general to protect investors and the public interest.

The MWCB mechanism under Rule 11.280 is an important, automatic mechanism that is invoked to promote stability and investor confidence during a period of significant stress when securities markets experience extreme broad-based declines. Extending the MWCB pilot for an additional year, to expire on October 18, 2020, would ensure the continued, uninterrupted operation of a consistent mechanism to halt trading across the U.S. markets while the Exchange, with the other SROs, consider and develop rules and procedures that would allow for the periodic testing of the performance of the MWCB mechanism, which would include industry

⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

member participation in such testing. The extension would also permit the SROs to consider enhancements to the MWCB processes such as modifications to the Level 3 process.

The Exchange also believes that the proposed rule change promotes just and equitable principles of trade in that it promotes transparency and uniformity across markets concerning when and how to halt trading in all stocks as a result of extraordinary market volatility. Based on the foregoing, the Exchange believes the benefits to market participants from the MWCB under Rule 11.280 should continue on a pilot basis because the MWCB will promote fair and orderly markets, and protect investors and the public interest.

Additionally, the Exchange believes that it is consistent with the public interest and the protection of investors to move to separate rules for clarity the LULD provisions and regulatory trading halt provisions in Rule 11.280. Furthermore, the Exchange believes it is consistent with the public interest and the protection of investors to clarify that these provisions, found in paragraphs (e), (g) and (h) are not subject to any pilot period. These clarifying changes are designed to ensure continued compliance by the Exchange and its Members with the requirements of the LULD Plan and to remove any ambiguity on the ongoing applicability of the LULD Plan or other trading halt provisions.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in the furtherance of the purposes of the Act because the proposal would ensure the continued, uninterrupted operation of a consistent mechanism to halt trading across the U.S. markets while the Exchange, in conjunction with the other SROs, consider and develop rules and procedures that would allow for the periodic testing of the performance of the MWCB mechanism. Furthermore, as noted above, the pilot proposed

to be scheduled to expire on October 18, 2020, will permit the exchanges to consider enhancements to the MWCB processes such as modifications to the Level 3 process.

Further, the Exchange understands that FINRA and other national securities exchanges have filed or will file proposals to extend their rules regarding the MWCB pilot. Thus, the proposed rule change will help to ensure consistency across market centers without implicating any competitive issues.

Additionally, the clarity to be provided by re-designating paragraph (e) as a separate rule implementing the LULD provisions, and paragraphs (g) and (h) as a separate rule providing the authority under which the Exchange can initiate a trading halt “in circumstances in which LTSE deems it necessary to protect investors and the public interest,” and the procedures by which LTSE can both initiate and terminate a trading halt, would not have an impact on competition.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received from Members, Participants, or Others

Written comments were neither solicited nor received.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

The Exchange has designated this rule filing as non-controversial under Section 19(b)(3)(A)⁹ of the Act and Rule 19b-4(f)(6)¹⁰ thereunder. Because the proposed rule change does not: (i) significantly affect the protection of investors or the public interest; (ii) impose any significant burden on competition; and (iii) become operative for 30 days from the date on which it was filed, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate, it has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.¹¹

⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

¹⁰ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6).

¹¹ In addition, Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii) requires the Exchange to give the Commission written notice of its intent to file the proposed rule change, along with a brief description and text

A proposed rule change filed under Rule 19b-4(f)(6)¹² normally does not become operative for 30 days after the date of filing. However, pursuant to Rule 19b-4(f)(6)(iii),¹³ the Commission may designate a shorter time if such action is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest. The Exchange has asked the Commission to waive the 30-day operative delay so that the proposal may become operative upon filing. Extending the pilot for an additional year will allow the uninterrupted operation of the existing pilot to halt trading across the U.S. markets. Therefore, the Commission believes that waiving the 30-day operative delay is consistent with the protection of investors and the public interest. The Commission hereby designates the proposed rule change to be operative upon filing.¹⁴

At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission summarily may temporarily suspend such rule change if it appears to the Commission that such action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest, for the protection of investors, or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. If the Commission takes such action, the Commission shall institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be approved or disapproved.

of the proposed rule change, at least five business days prior to the filing of the proposed rule change, or such shorter time as designated by the Commission. The Commission has waived this requirement.

¹² Id.

¹³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6)(iii).

¹⁴ For purposes only of waiving the 30-day operative delay, the Commission has also considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-LTSE-2019-03 on the subject line.

Paper comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-1090.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-LTSE-2019-03. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet website (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>).

Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for website viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549 on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. All comments received will be posted without change. Persons submitting comments are cautioned that we do not redact or edit personal identifying information

from comment submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-LTSE-2019-03 and should be submitted on or before [insert date 21 days from publication in the Federal Register].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.¹⁵

Eduardo A. Aleman
Deputy Secretary

¹⁵ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).