

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-95450; File No. SR-NASDAQ-2022-046)

August 9, 2022

Self-Regulatory Organizations; The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Amend its Schedule of Credits, at Equity 7, Section 118

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”),¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² notice is hereby given that on August 1, 2022, The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC (“Nasdaq” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC” or “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III, below, which Items have been prepared by the Exchange. 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

The Exchange proposes to amend the Exchange’s transaction credits at Equity 7, Section 118(a), as described further below. The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s Website at <https://listingcenter.nasdaq.com/rulebook/nasdaq/rules>, at the principal office of the Exchange, and at the Commission’s Public Reference Room.

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

In its filing with the Commission, the Exchange 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

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

Item IV below. The Exchange 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 of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed rule change is to amend the Exchange's schedule of credits, at Equity 7, Section 118. Specifically, the Exchange proposes to add (1) a new credit in Tapes A, B and C for displayed quotes/orders (other than Supplemental Orders or Designated Retail Orders) and (2) a new credit in Tapes A, B and C for non-displayed midpoint orders (other than Supplemental Orders).

Credit for Displayed Quotes / Orders

The Exchange currently provides credits to members for displayed quotes/orders (other than Supplemental Orders or Designated Retail Orders). The Exchange is proposing to add a credit of \$0.0020 per share executed to Tapes A, B and C. The credit will be available to a member that, through one or more of its Nasdaq Market Center MPIDs, (i) increases its shares of liquidity provided in all securities by at least 20% as a percentage of Consolidated Volume during the month relative to the month of July 2022 and (ii) has shares of liquidity provided of least 5 million average daily volume during the month. The Exchange hopes that by proposing the new credit it will incentivize members to increase their liquidity providing activity on the Exchange, which will improve market quality.

Credit for Non-Displayed Midpoint Orders

The Exchange proposes to provide a new supplemental credit for midpoint orders (excluding buy (sell) orders with midpoint pegging that receive an execution price that is lower (higher) than the midpoint of the NBBO) that provide liquidity to the Exchange. This credit will

be in addition to other credits otherwise available to members for adding non-displayed liquidity to the Exchange, but a member's activity will qualify it to receive only one of the supplemental credits at a time, meaning that they are not cumulative. Additionally, members that receive a supplemental credit will be entitled to a combined credit (regular and supplemental) up to a maximum of \$0.0027 per share executed.

Specifically, the Exchange proposes to provide a supplemental credit of \$0.0001 per share executed for midpoint orders (excluding buy (sell) orders with midpoint pegging that receive an execution price that is lower (higher) than the midpoint of the NBBO) if the member, during the month (i) provides at least 10 million shares of midpoint liquidity per day during the month; and (ii) increases providing liquidity through midpoint orders by 50% or more relative to the member's July 2022 consolidated volume provided through midpoint orders.

The purpose of the new credit is to provide extra incentive to members that provide non-displayed liquidity to the Exchange to do so through midpoint orders, as well as to grow substantially the extent to which they provide midpoint orders to the Exchange relative to a recent benchmark month. The Exchange believes that if such incentives are effective, then any ensuing increase in midpoint liquidity to the Exchange will improve market quality, to the benefit of all participants.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,³ in general, and furthers the objectives of Sections 6(b)(4) and 6(b)(5) of the Act,⁴ in particular, in that it provides for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees and other charges among

³ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

members and issuers and other persons using any facility, and is not designed to permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers.

The Proposal is Reasonable

The Exchange's proposed changes to its schedule of credits are reasonable in several respects. As a threshold matter, the Exchange is subject to significant competitive forces in the market for equity securities transaction services that constrain its pricing determinations in that market. The fact that this market is competitive has long been recognized by the courts. In NetCoalition v. Securities and Exchange Commission, the D.C. Circuit stated as follows: “[n]o one disputes that competition for order flow is ‘fierce.’ ... As the SEC explained, ‘[i]n the U.S. national market system, buyers and sellers of securities, and the broker-dealers that act as their order-routing agents, have a wide range of choices of where to route orders for execution’; [and] ‘no exchange can afford to take its market share percentages for granted’ because ‘no exchange possesses a monopoly, regulatory or otherwise, in the execution of order flow from broker dealers’”⁵

The Commission and the courts have repeatedly expressed their preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. In Regulation NMS, while adopting a series of steps to improve the current market model, the Commission highlighted the importance of market forces in determining prices and SRO revenues and, also, recognized that current regulation of the market system “has been remarkably successful in promoting market competition in its broader forms that are most

⁵ NetCoalition v. SEC, 615 F.3d 525, 539 (D.C. Cir. 2010) (quoting Securities Exchange Act Release No. 59039 (December 2, 2008), 73 FR 74770, 74782-83 (December 9, 2008) (SR-NYSEArca-2006-21)).

important to investors and listed companies.”⁶

Numerous indicia demonstrate the competitive nature of this market. For example, clear substitutes to the Exchange exist in the market for equity security transaction services. The Exchange is only one of several equity venues to which market participants may direct their order flow. Competing equity exchanges offer similar tiered pricing structures to that of the Exchange, including schedules of rebates and fees that apply based upon members achieving certain volume thresholds.

Within this environment, market participants can freely and often do shift their order flow among the Exchange and competing venues in response to changes in their respective pricing schedules. As such, the proposal represents a reasonable attempt by the Exchange to increase its liquidity and market share relative to its competitors.

The Exchange believes that it is reasonable to establish new transaction credits, at Equity 7, Section 118(a), because these new credits will encourage the addition of and/or growth in the addition of displayed liquidity and non-displayed midpoint liquidity to the Exchange.

The Exchange believes that it is reasonable to establish a new \$0.0020 per share executed transaction credit, at Equity 7, Section 118(a), for a member that, through one or more of its Nasdaq Market Center MPIDs, (i) increases its shares of liquidity provided in all securities by at least 20% as a percentage of Consolidated Volume during the month relative to the month of July 2022 and (ii) has shares of liquidity provided of least 5 million average daily volume during the month. The new credit will encourage substantial activity on the Exchange, which will improve the overall market quality to the benefit of all market participants. The Exchange

⁶ Securities Exchange Act Release No. 51808 (June 9, 2005), 70 FR 37496, 37499 (June 29, 2005) (“Regulation NMS Adopting Release”).

believes that if the new credit is effective, then liquidity adding activity on the Exchange will increase and market quality will improve for the benefit of all participants.

The Exchange also believes it is reasonable to establish a new supplemental credit of \$0.0001 per share executed for midpoint orders (excluding buy (sell) orders with midpoint pegging that receive an execution price that is lower (higher) than the midpoint of the NBBO) if the member, during the month (i) provides at least 10 million shares of midpoint liquidity per day during the month; and (ii) increases providing liquidity through midpoint orders by 50% or more relative to the member's July 2022 consolidated volume provided through midpoint orders. This proposal is reasonable because it will provide extra incentive to members that provide non-displayed liquidity to the Exchange to do so through midpoint orders, as well as to grow substantially the extent to which they provide midpoint orders to the Exchange relative to a recent benchmark month. The Exchange believes that if such incentive is effective, then any ensuing increase in midpoint liquidity to the Exchange will once again improve market quality, to the benefit of all participants.

The Exchange believes that it is reasonable to exclude from the supplemental credit orders with midpoint pegging which execute at prices less aggressive than the midpoint of the NBBO because such orders already receive price improvements, such that members do not require additional inducements to enter these orders on the Exchange.

The Exchange notes that those market participants that are dissatisfied with the proposal are free to shift their order flow to competing venues that offer more generous pricing or less stringent qualifying criteria.

The Proposal is an Equitable Allocation of Credits

The Exchange believes its proposal will allocate its charges and credits fairly among its market participants.

The Exchange believes that it is an equitable allocation to establish new transaction credits because the proposal will encourage members to increase the extent to which they add liquidity to the Exchange. To the extent that the Exchange succeeds in increasing the levels of liquidity and activity on the Exchange, then the Exchange will experience improvements in its market quality, which stands to benefit all market participants.

Any participant that is dissatisfied with the proposal is free to shift their order flow to competing venues that provide more generous pricing or less stringent qualifying criteria.

The Proposal is not Unfairly Discriminatory

The Exchange believes that its proposal is not unfairly discriminatory. As an initial matter, the Exchange believes that nothing about its volume-based tiered pricing model is inherently unfair; instead, it is a rational pricing model that is well-established and ubiquitous in today's economy among firms in various industries – from co-branded credit cards to grocery stores to cellular telephone data plans – that use it to reward the loyalty of their best customers that provide high levels of business activity and incent other customers to increase the extent of their business activity. It is also a pricing model that the Exchange and its competitors have long employed with the assent of the Commission. It is fair because it enhances price discovery and improves the overall quality of the equity markets.

The Exchange believes that its proposal to adopt new credits is not unfairly discriminatory because the credits are available to all members. Moreover, the proposal stands to improve the overall market quality of the Exchange, to the benefit of all market participants,

by incentivizing members to increase the extent of their liquidity adding activity on the Exchange. Any participant that is dissatisfied with the proposal is free to shift their order flow to competing venues that provide more generous pricing or less stringent qualifying criteria.

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 not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

Intramarket Competition

The Exchange does not believe that its proposal will place any category of Exchange participant at a competitive disadvantage.

As noted above, the Exchange's proposal to add new transaction credits is intended to have market-improving effects, to the benefit of all members. Any member may elect to achieve the levels of liquidity required in order to qualify for the new credits.

The Exchange notes that its members are free to trade on other venues to the extent they believe that the credits are not attractive. As one can observe by looking at any market share chart, price competition between exchanges is fierce, with liquidity and market share moving freely between exchanges in reaction to fee and credit changes.

Intermarket Competition

In terms of inter-market competition, the Exchange notes that it operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily favor competing venues if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive, or rebate opportunities available at other venues to be more favorable. In such an environment, the Exchange must continually adjust its credits and fees to remain competitive with other exchanges and with alternative trading systems that have been exempted from compliance with the statutory standards applicable to exchanges. Because competitors are free to modify their own credits and fees in response, and because

market participants may readily adjust their order routing practices, the Exchange believes that the degree to which credit or fee changes in this market may impose any burden on competition is extremely limited.

The proposed new credits are reflective of this competition because, as a threshold issue, the Exchange is a relatively small market so its ability to burden intermarket competition is limited. In this regard, even the largest U.S. equities exchange by volume only has 17-18% market share, which in most markets could hardly be categorized as having enough market power to burden competition. Moreover, as noted above, price competition between exchanges is fierce, with liquidity and market share moving freely between exchanges in reaction to fee and credit changes. This is in addition to free flow of order flow to and among off-exchange venues which comprises more than 40% of industry volume in recent months.

The Exchange's proposal to add new transaction credits are pro-competitive in that the Exchange intends for them to increase liquidity addition activity on the Exchange, thereby rendering the Exchange a more attractive and vibrant venue to market participants.

In sum, if the changes proposed herein are unattractive to market participants, it is likely that the Exchange will lose market share as a result. Accordingly, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed change will impair the ability of members or competing order execution venues to maintain their competitive standing in the financial markets.

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

No written comments were either solicited or received.

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

The foregoing rule change has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)(ii) of the Act.⁷

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: (i) necessary or appropriate in the public interest; (ii) for the protection of investors; or (iii) 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 should be approved or disapproved.

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-NASDAQ-2022-046 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-NASDAQ-2022-046. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review

⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(ii).

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-NASDAQ-2022-046 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.⁸

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,
Deputy Secretary.

⁸ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).