

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-98110; File No. SR-NYSEAMER-2023-37)

August 11, 2023

Self-Regulatory Organizations; NYSE American LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Change to Amend the NYSE American Equities Price List to Adopt a Fee for Directed Orders Routed Directly By the Exchange to an Alternative Trading System

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1)¹ of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”),² and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,³ notice is hereby given that, on July 31, 2023, NYSE American LLC (“NYSE American” or the “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I, II, and III 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

The Exchange proposes to amend the NYSE American Equities Price List (“Price List”) to adopt a fee for Directed Orders routed directly by the Exchange to an alternative trading system (“ATS”). The proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s website at www.nyse.com, 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 self-regulatory organization included statements concerning the purpose of, and basis for, the proposed rule change and discussed any comments

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 15 U.S.C. 78a.

³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

it received on the proposed rule change. The text of those statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. The Exchange has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant parts of such statements.

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

1. Purpose

The Exchange proposes to amend the Price List to adopt a fee for Directed Orders routed directly by the Exchange to an ATS. The Exchange proposes to implement the fee change effective August 1, 2023.

Background

The Exchange operates in a highly competitive market. The Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) has repeatedly expressed its preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. In Regulation NMS, 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 important to investors and listed companies.”⁴

While Regulation NMS has enhanced competition, it has also fostered a “fragmented” market structure where trading in a single stock can occur across multiple trading centers. When multiple trading centers compete for order flow in the same stock, the Commission has recognized that “such competition can lead to the fragmentation of order flow in that stock.”⁵

⁴ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 51808 (June 9, 2005), 70 FR 37496, 37499 (June 29, 2005) (File No. S7-10-04) (Final Rule) (“Regulation NMS”).

⁵ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 61358, 75 FR 3594, 3597 (January 21, 2010) (File No. S7-02-10) (Concept Release on Equity Market Structure).

Indeed, equity trading is currently dispersed across 16 exchanges,⁶ numerous alternative trading systems,⁷ and broker-dealer internalizers and wholesalers, all competing for order flow. Based on publicly available information, no single exchange currently has more than 17% market share.⁸ Therefore, no exchange possesses significant pricing power in the execution of cash equity order flow. More specifically, the Exchange currently has less than 1% market share of executed volume of cash equities trading.⁹

The Exchange believes that the ever-shifting market share among the exchanges from month to month demonstrates that market participants can move order flow, or discontinue or reduce use of certain categories of products. While it is not possible to know a firm's reason for shifting order flow, the Exchange believes that one such reason is because of fee changes at any of the registered exchanges or non-exchange venues to which a firm routes order flow. Accordingly, competitive forces constrain exchange transaction fees because market participants can readily trade on competing venues if they deem pricing levels at those other venues to be more favorable.

Proposed Rule Change

Pursuant to Commission approval, the Exchange has adopted an order type known as Directed Orders.¹⁰ Under Exchange rules, the ATS to which a Directed Order is routed is

⁶ See Cboe U.S Equities Market Volume Summary, available at https://markets.cboe.com/us/equities/market_share. See generally <https://www.sec.gov/fast-answers/divisionsmarketregmrexchangesshtml.html>.

⁷ See FINRA ATS Transparency Data, available at <https://otctransparency.finra.org/otctransparency/AtsIssueData>. A list of alternative trading systems registered with the Commission is available at <https://www.sec.gov/foia/docs/atlist.htm>.

⁸ See Cboe Global Markets U.S. Equities Market Volume Summary, available at http://markets.cboe.com/us/equities/market_share/.

⁹ See *id.*

¹⁰ A Directed Order is a Limit Order with instructions to route on arrival at its limit price to a specified ATS with which the Exchange maintains an electronic linkage. See Rule 7.31E(f)(4). See also Securities

responsible for validating whether the order is eligible to be accepted, and if such ATS determines to reject the order, the order would be cancelled. Directed Orders that are the subject of this proposed rule change are those that are routed to OneChronos LLC (“OneChronos”).

The Exchange implemented the routing functionality to OneChronos on September 2, 2022,¹¹ and introduced the functionality at that time without charging a fee.¹² The Exchange now proposes to adopt a fee of \$0.0015 per share for Directed Orders routed to OneChronos. To reflect the proposed fee, the Exchange proposes to amend current Section III. Fees for Routing for all ETP Holders, to state “\$0.0015 per share for Directed Orders routed to OneChronos LLC” for securities priced at or above \$1.00.

Since its implementation, the Directed Order functionality has facilitated additional trading opportunities by offering ETP Holders the ability to designate orders submitted to the Exchange to be routed to OneChronos for execution. The functionality has also created efficiencies for ETP Holders that choose to use the functionality by enabling them to send orders that they wish to route to OneChronos through the Exchange by leveraging order entry protocols already configured for their interaction with the Exchange. Routing functionality offered by the Exchange is completely optional and ETP Holders can readily select between various providers of routing services, including other exchanges and non-exchange venues. ETP Holders that choose not to utilize Directed Orders would continue to be able to trade on the Exchange as they currently do.

Exchange Act Release No. 95424 (August 4, 2022), 87 FR 48716 (August 10, 2022) (SR-NYSEAMER-2022-19).

¹¹ See https://www.nyse.com/publicdocs/nyse/notifications/trader-update/110000456275/OneChronos_August_2022_Trader_Update_Final.pdf

¹² See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 95813 (September 16, 2022), 87 FR 57948 (September 22, 2022) (SR-NYSEAMER-2022-40).

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,¹³ in general, and furthers the objectives of Sections 6(b)(4) and (5) of the Act,¹⁴ in particular, because it provides for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees, and other charges among its members, issuers and other persons using its facilities and does not unfairly discriminate between customers, issuers, brokers or dealers.

As discussed above, the Exchange operates in a highly fragmented and competitive market. The Commission has repeatedly expressed its preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. Specifically, in Regulation NMS, 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 important to investors and listed companies.”¹⁵

The Exchange believes that the ever-shifting market share among the exchanges from month to month demonstrates that market participants can shift order flow, or discontinue or reduce use of certain categories of products, in response to fee changes. Accordingly, changes to exchange transaction fees can have a direct effect on the ability of an exchange to compete for order flow.

The routing of orders to OneChronos is provided by the Exchange on a voluntary basis and no rule or regulation requires that the Exchange offer it. Nor does any rule or regulation require market participants to send orders to an ATS generally, let alone to OneChronos. The

¹³ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

¹⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

¹⁵ See supra note 4.

routing of orders to OneChronos operates similarly to the Primary Only Order already offered by the Exchange, which is an order that is routed directly to the primary listing market on arrival, without interacting with the interest on the Exchange Book.¹⁶

The Exchange believes its proposal equitably allocates its fees among market participants. The Exchange believes that the proposal represents an equitable allocation of fees because it would apply uniformly to all ETP Holders, in that all ETP Holders will have the ability to designate orders submitted to the Exchange to be routed to OneChronos, and each such ETP Holder would be charged the proposed fee when utilizing the functionality. Without having a view of ETP Holders' activity on other exchanges and off-exchange venues, the Exchange has no way of knowing whether the proposed fee would result in any ETP Holder from reducing or discontinuing its use of the routing functionality. While the Exchange has no way of knowing whether this proposed rule change would serve as a disincentive to utilize the order type, the Exchange believes that a number of ETP Holders will continue to utilize the functionality because of the efficiencies created for ETP Holders that enables them to send orders that they wish to route to OneChronos through the Exchange by leveraging order entry protocols already configured for their interactions with the Exchange.

The Exchange reiterates that the routing functionality offered by the Exchange is completely optional and that the Exchange operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily select between various providers of routing services with different product offerings and different pricing. The Exchange believes that the proposed flat fee structure for orders routed to away venues is a fair and equitable approach to pricing, as it will provide certainty with respect to execution fees.

¹⁶ See Rule 7.31E(f)(1).

The Exchange believes that the proposal is not unfairly discriminatory. The Exchange believes it is not unfairly discriminatory as the proposal to charge a fee would be assessed on an equal basis to all ETP Holders that use the Directed Order functionality. Moreover, this proposed rule change neither targets nor will it have a disparate impact on any particular category of market participant. The Exchange believes that this proposal does not permit unfair discrimination because the changes described in this proposal would be applied to all similarly situated ETP Holders. Accordingly, no ETP Holder already operating on the Exchange would be disadvantaged by the proposed allocation of fees. The Exchange further believes that the proposed rule change would not permit unfair discrimination among ETP Holders because the Directed Order functionality would remain available to all ETP Holders on an equal basis and each such participant would be charged the same fee for using the functionality.

Finally, the submission of orders to the Exchange is optional for ETP Holders in that they could choose whether to submit orders to the Exchange and, if they do, the extent of its activity in this regard. The Exchange believes that it is subject to significant competitive forces, as described below in the Exchange's statement regarding the burden on competition.

For the foregoing reasons, the Exchange believes that the proposal is consistent with the Act.

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

In accordance with Section 6(b)(8) of the Act,¹⁷ the Exchange believes that the proposed rule change would not impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The Exchange believes that the proposed change furthers the Commission's goal in adopting Regulation NMS of fostering integrated competition among

¹⁷ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(8).

orders, which promotes “more efficient pricing of individual stocks for all types of orders, large and small.”¹⁸ The Exchange does not believe that the proposed fee change represents a significant departure from previous pricing offered by the Exchange or pricing offered by the Exchange’s competitors. ETP Holders may opt to disfavor the Exchange’s pricing if they believe that alternatives offer them better value. Accordingly, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed change will impair the ability of ETP Holders or competing venues to maintain their competitive standing in the financial markets.

Intramarket Competition. The Exchange believes the proposed amendment to its Price List would not impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. The Directed Order functionality is available to all ETP Holders and all ETP Holders that use the functionality to route their orders to OneChronos would be charged the proposed fee. The routing of orders to OneChronos is provided by the Exchange on a voluntary basis and no rule or regulation requires that the Exchange offer it. ETP Holders have the choice whether or not to use the Directed Order functionality and those that choose not to utilize it will not be impacted by the proposed rule change. The Exchange also does not believe the proposed rule change would impact intramarket competition as the proposed fee would apply to all ETP Holders equally that choose to utilize the Directed Order functionality, and therefore the proposed change would not impose a disparate burden on competition among market participants on the Exchange.

Intermarket Competition. The Exchange operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily choose to send their orders to other exchange and off-exchange venues if they deem fee levels at those other venues to be more favorable. As noted

¹⁸ See supra note 4.

above, the Exchange's market share of intraday trading is currently less than 1%. In such an environment, the Exchange must continually adjust its fees and rebates to remain competitive with other exchanges and with off-exchange venues. Because competitors are free to modify their own fees and credits in response, and because market participants may readily adjust their order routing practices, the Exchange does not believe its proposed fee change can impose any burden on intermarket competition.

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

No written comments were solicited or received with respect to the proposed rule change.

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

The foregoing rule change has become effective upon filing pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)¹⁹ of the Act and paragraph (f) thereunder. 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.

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:

¹⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

Electronic Comments:

- Use the Commission's internet comment form (<https://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an email to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include file number SR-NYSEAMER-2023-37 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-NYSEAMER-2023-37. This file number should be included on the subject line if email 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 (<https://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 a.m. and 3 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. Do not include personal identifiable information in submissions; you should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly. We may redact in part or withhold entirely from publication submitted material that is obscene or subject to copyright

protection. All submissions should refer to file number SR-NYSEAMER-2023-37 and should be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 21 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.²⁰

J. Matthew DeLesDernier,

Deputy Secretary.

²⁰ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).