

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-84833; File No. SR-BX-2018-062)

December 17, 2018

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq BX, Inc.; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Amend the Exchange's Transaction Fees 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 December 3, 2018, Nasdaq BX, Inc. ("BX" 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 fees at Equity 7, Section 118 to adopt a new credit for entering an order that accesses liquidity in the Nasdaq BX Equities System.

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange's website at <http://nasdaqbx.cchwallstreet.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 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 transaction fees at Equity 7, Section 118 to adopt a new credit for entering an order that accesses liquidity in the Nasdaq BX Equities System. Specifically, the Exchange is proposing to provide a credit of \$0.0018 per share executed for orders that access liquidity in Tape A securities (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price). To qualify for the proposed credit, a member must access liquidity equal to or exceeding 0.30% of total Consolidated Volume³ during a month. The proposed new credit, and its associated qualification criteria, is similar to existing credits provided for Orders that access liquidity, which require a certain level of total Consolidated Volume accessed during a month to qualify.

2. Statutory Basis

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

³ The term “Consolidated Volume” shall mean the total consolidated volume reported to all consolidated transaction reporting plans by all exchanges and trade reporting facilities during a month in equity securities, excluding executed orders with a size of less than one round lot. For purposes of calculating Consolidated Volume and the extent of a member’s trading activity the date of the annual reconstitution of the Russell Investments Indexes shall be excluded from both total Consolidated Volume and the member’s trading activity. See Equity 7, Section 118.

⁴ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

⁵ 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 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 important to investors and listed companies.”⁶

Likewise, in NetCoalition v. Securities and Exchange Commission⁷ (“NetCoalition”) the D.C. Circuit upheld the Commission’s use of a market-based approach in evaluating the fairness of market data fees against a challenge claiming that Congress mandated a cost-based approach.⁸ As the court emphasized, the Commission “intended in Regulation NMS that ‘market forces, rather than regulatory requirements’ play a role in determining the market data . . . to be made available to investors and at what cost.”⁹

Further, “[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

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

⁷ NetCoalition v. SEC, 615 F.3d 525 (D.C. Cir. 2010).

⁸ See NetCoalition, at 534 - 535.

⁹ Id. at 537.

granted' because 'no exchange possesses a monopoly, regulatory or otherwise, in the execution of order flow from broker dealers'"¹⁰

The Exchange believes that the proposed \$0.0018 per share executed credit for orders that access liquidity in Tape A securities (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price) is reasonable because the Exchange provides other \$0.0018 per share executed credits for entering an order that accesses liquidity in the Nasdaq BX Equities System. For example, the Exchange currently provides members a credit of \$0.0018 per share executed for an order that accesses liquidity in securities in Tapes A and C (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price) entered by a member that: (i) accesses liquidity equal to or exceeding 0.20% of total Consolidated Volume during a month; and (ii) accesses 20% more liquidity as a percentage of Consolidated Volume than the member accessed in May 2018. The proposed credit will provide another opportunity to members to receive a \$0.0018 per share executed credit in return for certain levels of participation on the Exchange as measured by total Consolidated Volume.

The Exchange believes that the proposed \$0.0018 per share executed credit for orders that access liquidity in Tape A securities (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price) is an equitable allocation and is not unfairly discriminatory because the Exchange will apply the same fee to all similarly situated members. To qualify for the new credit, a member must access liquidity equal to or exceeding 0.30% of total Consolidated Volume during a month. Like the other qualification criteria required to receive a credit for an order that accesses liquidity, the

¹⁰ Id. at 539 (quoting Securities Exchange Act Release No. 59039 (December 2, 2008), 73 FR 74770, 74782-83 (December 9, 2008) (SR-NYSEArca-2006-21)).

proposed qualification criteria ensures that members qualifying for this credit are meaningfully participating on the Exchange in a given month. The Exchange notes that any member may qualify for the proposed credit if it meets the levels of total Consolidated Volume required by the credit's qualification criteria. Moreover, if the level of total Consolidated Volume is too high for a member to achieve in a given month, the member may qualify for other lower credits with lower total Consolidated Volume qualification requirements available for orders that access liquidity in Tape A securities (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price). For example, the Exchange provides a credit of \$0.0015 per share executed for an order that accesses liquidity (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price) entered by a member that accesses liquidity equal to or exceeding 0.065% of total Consolidated Volume during month. Last, the Exchange notes that the proposed credit is limited to orders that access liquidity in Tape A securities. The Exchange is specifically attempting to increase the level of liquidity removal in Tape A securities, which the Exchange has identified as an area in need of improvement. Members will continue to have opportunities to qualify for the same or similar credits for removal of liquidity in Tape B and C securities. Thus, the Exchange believes that this additional new credit provides all of its members with choice and flexibility, and is therefore an equitable allocation and not unfairly discriminatory.

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

In this instance, the proposed new credit tier does not impose a burden on competition because the Exchange's execution services are completely voluntary and subject to extensive competition both from other exchanges and from off-exchange venues. The proposed credit provides another opportunity for all market participants to receive a credit in return for market-improving activity on the Exchange. In this regard, the new credit tier is designed to provide incentive to market participants to remove a certain level of total Consolidated Volume during a month receive the credit for its orders that access liquidity in securities in Tape A securities (excluding orders with Midpoint pegging and excluding orders that receive price improvement and execute against an order with a Non-displayed price). Thus, the new credit may increase activity on the Exchange by attracting removers of liquidity in Tape A securities. In sum, if the changes proposed herein are unattractive to market participants, it is likely that the Exchange will not gain market share as a result. Accordingly, the Exchange does not believe that the proposed changes 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.¹¹

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-BX-2018-062 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-BX-2018-062. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your

¹¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(ii).

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-BX-2018-062 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.¹²

Eduardo A. Aleman
Deputy Secretary

¹² 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).