II. Terms of the Proposed Consent Order

The proposed Order would provide relief for the alleged anticompetitive effects of the conduct principally by means of a cease and desist order barring Respondent from continuing its practice of filing tariffs containing collective intrastate rates.

Paragraph II of the proposed Order bars Respondent from filing a tariff that contains collective intrastate rates. This provision will terminate Respondent's current practice of filing tariffs that contain intrastate rates that are the product of an agreement among movers in the State of Indiana. This paragraph also prohibits Respondent from engaging in activities such as exchanges of information that would facilitate member movers in agreeing on the rates contained in their intrastate tariffs. It also bars Respondent from maintaining a tariff committee or agreeing with movers to institute any automatic intrastate rate increases.

Paragraph III of the proposed Order requires Respondent to cancel all tariffs that it has filed that contain intrastate collective rates. This provision will ensure that the collective intrastate rates now on file in the State of Indiana will no longer be in force, allowing for competitive rates in future individual mover tariffs. Paragraph III of the proposed Order also requires Respondent to cancel any provisions in its governing documents that permit it to engage in activities barred by the Order.

Paragraph IV of the proposed Order requires Respondent to send to its members a letter explaining the terms of the Order. This will make clear to members that they can no longer engage in collective rate-making activities.

Paragraphs V and VI of the proposed Order require Respondent to inform the Commission of any change in Respondent that could affect compliance with the Order and to file compliance reports with the Commission for a number of years. Paragraph VII of the proposed Order states that the Order will terminate in twenty years.

III. Opportunity for Modification of the Order

Respondent can seek to modify the proposed Order to permit it to engage in collective rate-making if it can demonstrate that the "state action" defense would immunize its conduct.[1] The state action doctrine dates back to the Supreme Court's 1943 opinion in *Parker v. Brown*, which held that, in light of the States' status as sovereigns, and given basic principles of federalism, Congress would not have intended the Sherman Act to apply to the activities of States themselves.[2] The defense also has

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[1] 16 C.F.R. § 2.51. Because of this possibility, and because the issues raised by this case frequently arise, it is appropriate to address the state action defense in some detail.

[2] 317 U.S. 341 (1943).

been interpreted in limited circumstances to immunize from antitrust scrutiny private firms' activities that are conducted pursuant to state authority. States may not, however, simply authorize private parties to violate the antitrust laws.[3] Instead, a State must substitute its own control for that of the market.

Thus, the state action defense would be available to Respondent only if it could demonstrate that its conduct satisfied the strict two-pronged standard the Supreme Court set out in *California Retail Liquor Dealers Ass'n v. Midcal Aluminum, Inc.*: "the challenged restraint must be 'one clearly articulated and affirmatively expressed as state policy'" and "the policy must be 'actively supervised' by the state itself."[4]

Under the first prong of *Midcal's* two-part test, Respondent would be required to show that the State of Indiana had "clearly articulated and affirmatively expressed as state policy" the desire to replace competition with a regulatory scheme. With regard to this prong, it appears that Indiana law specifically contemplates common carriers' entering into "joint rates" under certain circumstances that do not appear to be applicable to the conduct at issue here.[5] Respondent would meet its burden only if it could show that this or some other provision of Indiana law constitutes a clear expression of state policy to displace competition and allow for collective rate-making among competitors.

Under the second prong of the *Midcal* test, Respondent would be required to demonstrate "active supervision" by state officials. The Supreme Court has made clear that the active supervision

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[3] *Parker v. Brown*, 317 U.S. 341, 351 (1943) ("[A] state does not give immunity to those who violate the Sherman Act by authorizing them to violate it, or declaring that their action is lawful.").

[4] 445 U.S. 97, 105 (1980) ("*Midcal*") (*quoting City of Lafayette v. Louisiana Power & Light*, 435 U.S. 389, at 410 (1978)). The "restraint" in this instance is the collective rate-setting. This articulation of the state action doctrine was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in *FTC v. Ticor Title Insurance Co.* ("*Ticor*"), where the Court noted that the gravity of the antitrust violation of price fixing requires exceptionally clear evidence of the State's decision to supplant competition. 504 U.S. 621, 633 (1992).

[5] *See* IND. CODE ANN. § 8-2.1-22-18(a) (Michie 2001). The state administrative code defines "joint rate" to mean "a rate that applies over the lines or routes of two or more carriers and that is made by arrangement or agreement between such carriers." 45 IAC 16-3-2(3). This definition suggests that the term "joint rate" refers only to situations where more than one carrier is used to perform a single move rather than to situations where competing movers file collective rates.

involvement over what is essentially a private price-fixing arrangement."[6] Rather, active supervision is designed to ensure that a private party's anticompetitive action is shielded from antitrust liability only when "the State has effectively made [the challenged] conduct its own."[7]

In order for state supervision to be adequate for state action purposes, state officials must engage in a "pointed re-examination" of the private conduct.[8] In this regard, the State must "have *and* exercise ultimate authority" over the challenged anticompetitive conduct.[9] To do so, state officials must exercise "sufficient independent judgment and control so that the details of the rates or prices have been established as a product of deliberate state intervention, not simply by agreement among private parties."[10] One asserting the state action defense must demonstrate that the state agency has ascertained the relevant facts, examined the substantive merits of the private action, assessed whether that private action comports with the underlying statutory criteria established by the state legislature, and squarely ruled on the merits of the private action in a way sufficient to establish the challenged conduct as a product of deliberate state intervention rather than private choice.

IV. General Characteristics of Active Supervision

At its core, the active supervision requirement serves to identify those responsible for public policy decisions. The clear articulation requirement ensures that, if a State is to displace national competition norms, it must replace them with specific state regulatory standards; a State may not simply authorize private parties to disregard federal laws,[11] but must genuinely substitute an alternative state policy. The active supervision requirement, in turn, ensures that responsibility for the ultimate conduct can properly be laid on the State itself, and not merely on the private actors. As the Court explained in *Ticor*:

> States must accept political responsibility for actions they intend to undertake. . . . Federalism serves to assign political responsibility, not to obscure it. . . . For states which do choose to displace the free market with regulation, our insistence on real compliance with both parts of the

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[6] *Midcal,* 445 U.S. at 105-06.

[7] *Patrick v. Burget*, 486 U.S. 94, 106 (1988).

[8] *Midcal,* 445 U.S. at 106. *Accord*, *Ticor*, 504 U.S. at 634-35; *Patrick v. Burget*, 486 U.S. 94, 100-01 (1988).

[9] *Patrick v. Burget*, 486 U.S. at 101 (emphases added).

[10] *Ticor,* 504 U.S. at 634-35.

[11] *Parker,* 317 U.S. at 351.

[12] 504 U.S. at 636.

[13] *See New York v. United States*

Additionally, in assembling an adequate factual record, the procedural value of notice and opportunity to comment is well established. These procedural elements, which have evolved in various contexts through common law, through state and federal constitutional law, and through Administrative Procedure Act rulemakings,[17] are powerful engines for ensuring that relevant facts – especially those facts that might tend to contradict the proponent's contentions – are brought to the state decision-maker's attention.

B. A Written Decision

A second important element the Commission will look to in determining whether there has been active supervision is whether the state board renders its decision in writing. Though not essential, the existence of a written decision is normally the clearest indication that the board (1) genuinely has assessed whether the private conduct satisfies the legislature's stated standards and (2) has directly taken responsibility for that determination. Through a written decision, whether rejecting or (the more critical context) approving particular private conduct that would otherwise violate the federal antitrust laws, the state board would provide analysis and reasoning, and supporting evidence, that the private conduct furthers the legislature's objectives.[18]

C. Qualitative and Quantitative Compliance with State Policy Op2u.isiondoes writseeke effec226

[17] The Administrative Procedure Act defines a rule, in part, as "the whole or a part of an agency statement of general or particular applicability and future effect designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy." 5 U.S.C. § 551(4). Actions "concerned with the approval of 'tariffs' or rate schedules filed by public utilities and common carriers" are typical examples of rulemaking proceedings. E. Gellhorn & R. Levin, Administrative Law & Process 300 (1997).

[18] A record preserved by other means, such as audio or video recording technology, might also suffice, provided that it demonstrated that the board had (1) genuinely assessed the private conduct and (2) taken direct responsibility. Such an audio or video recording, however, will be an adequate substitute for a written opinion only when it provides a sufficiently transparent and decipherable view of the decision-making proceeding to facilitate meaningful public review and comment.

practices. Its purpose is to determine whether the State has exercised sufficient independent judgment and control so that the details of the rates or prices have been established as a product of deliberate state intervention, not simply by agreement among private parties. Much as in causation inquiries, the analysis asks whether the State has played a substantial role in determining the specifics of the economic policy. The question is not how well state regulation works but whether the anticompetitive scheme is the State's own.[19]

Thus, a decision by a state board that assesses both qualitatively and quantitatively whether the "details of the rates or prices" satisfy the state criteria ensures that it is the State, and not the private parties, that determines the substantive policy. There should be evidence of the steps the State took in analyzing the rates filed and the criterion it used in evaluating those rates. There should also be evidence showing whether the State independently verified the accuracy of financial data submitted and whether it relied on accurate and representative samples of data. There should be evidence that the State has a thorough understanding of the consequences of the private parties' proposed action. Tariffs, for instance, can be complex, and there should be evidence that the State not only has analyzed the actual rates charged but also has analyzed the complex rules that may directly or indirectly impact the rates contained in the tariff.

If the State has chosen to include in its statute a requirement that the regulatory body evaluate the impact of particular conduct on "competition," or "consumer welfare," or some similar criteria, then – to meet the standard for active supervision – there should be evidence that the State has closely and carefully examined the likely impact of the conduct on consumers. Because the central purpose of the federal antitrust laws is also to protect competition and consumer welfare,[20] conduct that would run counter to those federal laws should not be lightly assumed to be consistent with parallel state goals. Especially when, as here, the underlying private conduct alleged is price fixing – which, as the *Ticor* Court noted, is possibly the most "pernicious" antitrust offense[21] – a careful consideration of the specific monetary impact on consumers is critical to any assessment of an overall impact on consumer welfare. That consideration, to the maximum extent practicable, should include an express quantitative assessment, based on reliable economic data, of the specific likely impact upon consumers.

It bears emphasizing that States need not choose to enact criteria such as promoting "competition" or "consumer welfare" – the central end of federal antitrust law. A State could instead enact a criterion such as maximizing the profits of members of a particular industry. Then, the State's

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[19] *Ticor*, 504 U.S. at 634-35.

[20] Indeed, consideration of consumer impact is at the heart of "[a] national policy" that preserves "the free market and . . . a system of free enterprise without price fixing or cartels." *Ticor*, 504 U.S. at 632.

[21] *Id.* at 639 ("No antitrust offense is more pernicious than price fixing.")

decision would need to assess whether that objective had been met.

On the other hand, if a State does not disavow (either expressly or through the promulgation of wholly contrary regulatory criteria) that consumer welfare is state regulatory policy, it must address consumer welfare in its regulatory analysis. In claiming state action immunity, a Respondent would need to demonstrate that the state board, in evaluating arguably anticompetitive conduct, had carefully considered and expressly quantified the likely impact of that conduct on consumers as a central element of deciding whether to approve that conduct.[22]

In the present case, Indiana has expressly chosen to give significant consideration to, among been met.

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[22] This requirement is based on the principle that the national policy favoring competition "is an essential part of the economic and legal system within which the separate States administer their own laws." *Id.* at 632.

[23] IND. CODE ANN. § 8-2.1-22-21(a) (Michie 2001).

public record. After 30 days, the Commission will again review the Agreement and comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the Agreement or make final the Order contained in the Agreement.

By accepting the proposed Order subject to final approval, the Commission anticipates that the competitive issues described in the proposed Complaint will be resolved. The purpose of this analysis is to invite and facilitate public comment concerning the proposed Order. It is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the Agreement and proposed Order or to modify their terms in any way.