

US Credit Research and Strategy

Fed Provides Strong Support for BBBs and Fallen Angels, Disappoints for Rest of High Yield and Loans

We evaluate the many effects that the Fed's additional measures will have across credit markets, including investment grade, high yield, municipal and asset-backed securities.

Today the Federal Reserve announced details of several of the programs that have been proposed since the onset of COVID-19. The announcements and term sheets can be found here: Federal Reserve takes additional actions to provide up to \$2.3 trillion in loans to support the economy.

When we examine the combined effect of the various facilities, we believe the Fed is providing significant support for companies that were rated investment grade as of March 22. This should drive a rally in short-dated investment grade debt generally as well as the lower rated segments of BBBs . For high yield companies, the Main Street Loan facilities are a disappointment, as terms are less favorable than we were led to believe by the CARES Act. The potential bright spot for high yield investors was that the Fed can purchase high yield ETFs, although they indicated this would not be their first choice. We understand that the Fed opening up the possibility of buying high yield has caused that market to rally today, but we expect there to be HY/IG decompression before the Fed actually buys high yield in any meaningful fashion. High yield investors can also feel better about fallen angels not overwhelming their market, but today's rally still feels somewhat extreme. The leveraged loan market could have benefitted from the inclusion of new AAA CLO tranches in TALF, but only static deals backed by newly issued collateral are eligible for the program, so it is unlikely to help clean up existing warehouses. The expansion of TALF to existing CMBS deals should help cap CMBS AAA spreads and consolidate the recent rally. Finally, the municipal market looks set to benefit from strong Fed support in the primary market, but the overall package is slightly below our expectations.

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Primary Market Corporate Credit Facility (PMCCF)

Quick Facts: PMCCF is expressly designed to serve as a funding backstop for US businesses or those with significant operations in and a majority of employees in the US, with an initial program size of \$500bn of the \$750bn split with the SMCCF. Leverage is 10 to 1, or 7 to 1 when acquiring a fallen angel. The issuer had to be investment grade-rated by a major nationally recognized statistical rating organization (NRSRO) as of March 22, 2020 (or by at least two agencies if rated by more than one) and at least BB-/Ba3 as of the date of purchase. Insured depository institutions are excluded. Maturities purchased will be four years or less and the facility can be the sole investor or purchase up to 25% of a bond issuance or loan syndication. There is some ambiguity about who can access the facility: the term sheet specifically mentions approaching the facility to refinance debt three months ahead of maturity, but says additionally issuers may approach at any time for new issuance as long as the rating criteria is met. An issuer may borrow up to 130% of its maximum outstanding bonds and loans from the past year as of March 22, 2020. The maximum size per issuer is 1.5% of the combined SMCCF and PMCCF. Pricing will be issuer-specific, informed by market conditions plus a 100bp facility fee. The facility will purchase assets through September 30, 2020, unless it is extended.

Views: We believe the PMCCF would significantly lower the refinancing risk for many lower-rated and recently downgraded IG companies. Unlike the SMCCF, which will buy bonds at fair market value (see below), PMCCF will purchase at an "issuer-specific, informed by market conditions" price plus a 100bps facility fee. For a 4y bond, the fee corresponds to about 25bp in spread. While that would suggest that an issuer that still has regular-way access to markets is unlikely to tap this primary facility, it does provide a relatively inexpensive backstop for funding access to companies.

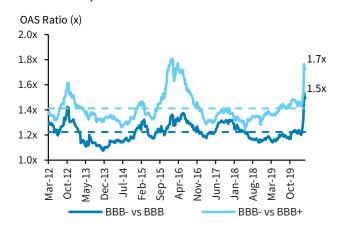
There has been a lot of focus on the risk of fallen angels potentially overwhelming the high yield market, which could severely limit the ability of fallen angels to refinance – we believe the announcement takes that tail risk off the table. By virtue of having access to the PMCCF, any future (or recently downgraded) fallen angels should screen as more attractive versus existing BB corporates. Names that should benefit immediately include Ford, Macy's, QVC and WES (see Figure 1). More broadly, we expect the lower-rated segments of the BBB market to rally meaningfully following this announcement. BBB- debt has underperformed the rest of the BBB space during this crisis period prior to today, trading 1.5x and 1.7x wider than BBB and BBB+ credits, respectively, amid growing concerns about downgrade risk for these credits (Figure 2). We expect these ratios to compress. Credits with meaningful risk of being downgraded to HY (the potential fallen angel candidates highlighted in the Rough Waters Brings a Wave of Angels, 20 March 2020) trade even wider than BBs and 1.5x BBB- (Figure 3) and will likely outperform the most on the back of today's announcement.

FIGURE 1. Recent Fallen Angels Which Would Qualify for the PMCCF and SMCCF

Ticker	Company Name	Sector	Amount Outstanding in US HY (\$ mn)	Market Value in US HY Index (\$ mn)	% of US HY
CLR	Continental Resources	Independent Energy	5,299	3,924	0.34%
F	Ford	Automotive	34,986	29,256	2.50%
KORS	Michael Kors	Retailers	450	328	0.03%
М	Macy's	Retailers	3,060	2,053	0.18%
PTEN	Patterson-UTI	Oil Field Services	875	369	0.03%
QVCN	QVC	Consumer Cyc Services	3,724	3,122	0.27%
RCL	Royal Caribbean Cruises	Leisure	1,450	1,053	0.09%
WES	Western Midstream	Midstream	7,820	5,972	0.51%
ZFFNGR	ZF NA Capital	Automotive	1,699	1,546	0.13%

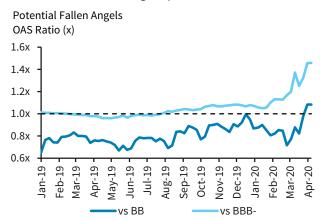
Source: Barclays Research

FIGURE 2. BBB- Spread ratio to BBB & BBB+ Debt



Source: Bloomberg, Barclays Research

FIGURE 3. Potential Fallen Angels Spread Ratio vs HY BB and BBB-



Please see "Rough Waters Brings a Wave of Angels", 20 March 2020 for a description of this cohort.

Source: Bloomberg, Barclays Research

Secondary Market Corporate Credit Facility (SMCCF)

Quick Facts: SMCFF will purchase bonds with five years or less to maturity of US businesses or those with significant operations in and a majority of employees in the US, initially up to \$250bn of the \$750bn allocated to this facility and the PMCCF. The issuer had to be investment graderated by a major nationally recognized statistical rating organization (NRSRO) as of March 22, 2020 (or by at least two agencies if rated by more than one) and at least BB-/Ba3 as of the date of purchase. Insured depository institutions are excluded. No issuer can be more than 1.5% of the facility and for each issuer the size is capped at 10% of its maximum bonds outstanding in the last year from March 22, 2020. Leverage will be 10 to 1 except for sub-investment grade issuers, where maximum leverage is 7 to 1. For ETFs, the Fed will buy a "preponderance" of ETFs with an objective of mirroring investment grade corporate bonds and the remainder in high yield corporate bond ETFs. The limit per ETF is 20% of the outstanding shares and the Fed will not purchase shares when prices materially exceed the NAV. The purchases will occur through September 30, 2020, unless extended.

Views: The initial program size is nearly 15% of the \$1.7tn of debt maturing in five years or less of US-domiciled investment grade companies excluding banks (Figure 4 shows the distribution of the \$1.7tn by rating). We believe that with the SMCCF potentially absorbing a significant

portion of the total outstanding front-end debt, the impact on valuations will be very substantial in this part of the market. We expect short-dated debt to rally meaningfully on the news and credit curves to steepen substantially, reversing the underperformance of the front end since the sell-off began (Figure 5). The updated SMCCF definitively excludes all banks and bank holding companies, after the preliminary term sheet was silent on whether they would be included. We do not expect this to lead to sustained underperformance of bank spreads. Reviewing the experience of bank spreads in EUR since the CSPP program was announced in March 2016 and began purchasing corporate bonds in June 2016 (Figure 6), banks initially lagged the move tighter in industrials but ultimately caught up and outperformed.

FIGURE 4. US-domiciled Non-bank Debt Maturing 5y or Less

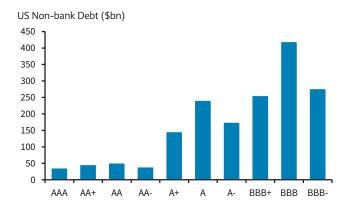


FIGURE 5. US Corporate Spread Change from the Tights by Maturity

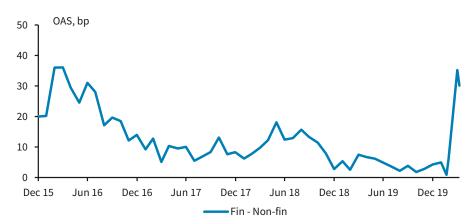


Note: Industrials excluding energy only. Spread change is calculated from tights for each individual maturity bucket.

Source: Bloomberg, Barclays Research

Source: Bloomberg, Barclays Research

FIGURE 6. EUR Financials versus Non-financials



BBB+ 5y Core financials minus BBB+ 5y Core Non-financials Source: Bloomberg, Barclays Research

Similar to the PMCCF, the inclusion of recent fallen angels is helpful for those credits. However, the market is also focused on the program's ability to buy high yield ETFs. We believe that the signaling value that the Fed could buy high yield in some form will be of most support, as we expect actual purchases of high yield ETFs to be minimal (even if the Fed bought 20% of HY ETFs that would still be less than 1% of the high yield market). As stated above, the Fed expects a "preponderance" of ETF purchases to be investment grade corporate bond ETFs and that it is not prepared to buy materially above NAV. Additionally, the term sheet with Blackrock, who will be managing the facility, says "Unless otherwise approved by New York Fed, ETFs shall be only used if their purchase is reasonably expected to achieve the purposes of the Facility more effectively than the purchase of underlying bonds." This signals to us that the Fed will likely

purchase ETFs only if there is not enough liquidity in corporate bonds, and perhaps if there were severe dislocations in ETF valuations relative to NAV as was the case especially in the high grade market last month. If there is significant decompression between IG and HY, this could be an effective tool for the Fed to limit that price action.

Main Street New Loan Facility (MSNLF) and Main Street Expanded Loan Facility (MSELF)

Quick Facts: Eligible companies can have up to 10,000 employees or up to \$2.5bn in revenue in 2019. The loans can only come from US insured depository institutions, US bank holding companies, and US savings and loan holding companies. The lenders will retain 5% of each loan and the combined size of the MSNLF and Main Street Expanded Loan Facility (MSELF) will be \$600bn. Loans have principal amortization and interest deferred for a year and prepayment is allowed without a penalty. The rate will SOFR + 250-400bp. The maximum size for an issuer in the MSNLF is the lesser of \$25mm or an amount that when added to the borrowers existing outstanding and committed but undrawn debt does not exceed 4x EBITDA from 2019 and the loan will be unsecured. For the MSELF, the lender would have had to have a term loan with the eligible borrower prior to April 8, 2020 and that loan could be upsized by the lesser of \$150mm, 30% of the borrowers committed but undrawn bank debt or an amount when added to the borrowers existing outstanding and committed but undrawn debt does not exceed 6x EBITDA from 2019. The MSELF will have the same collateral as the existing eligible loan.Both programs runs through September 30, 2020, unless extended.

Views: In Congress CARES About Corporates Too, we felt that the mid-sized company lending program could be very positive for leveraged finance companies since ~50% have between 500-10,000 employees and the Act mentioned 2% unsecured loans for these companies. With the release of the final term sheet, our view has changed and is much more negative on the program. While rates are higher, they remain favorable but the limit on the maximum loan size and leverage will severely limit the efficacy of the facility, especially for companies in the high yield universe. Further, we calculate that only 25% of the high yield bond market is below 4x gross leverage and 55% is below 6x and that is without even counting undrawn revolvers. For leveraged loans these numbers are even lower. Therefore, we believe the MSNLF will have minimal uptake among issuers in the leveraged finance market although banks could benefit from having some of the risk of existing revolvers 95% owned by the SPV.

Term Asset-Backed Securities Loan Facility (TALF)

Quick Facts: As was previously announced, TALF has been brought back to support issuance in the ABS market. It will initially make up to \$100bn of loans. The change from the original announcement is that it will now include CMBS and CLOs. Additionally, pricing for ABS has changed from 2-3y Libor based swaps + 100bp to OIS + 125bp to account for Libor decommissioning and a lower OIS rate. For CMBS, deals with exposure to property in the US or its territories issued before March 23, 2020 are eligible whereas for CLOs it is only deals issued after that date. For CLOs, only static deals are eligible and pricing will be 150bp over 30-day SOFR with a 20% haircut. To be eligible collateral, all or substantially all of the underlying collateral must be newly issued, except for legacy CMBS. TALF is set to run through September 30, 2020 and there is a 10bp administrative fee.

Views: Static deals are not typical for CLOs, although they can become more common in stressed times. In fact, the last deal to price was a \$477bn deal from GSO on April 2. As we

detailed in our recent report, Loans Decline, Warehouse Worries Increase, we believe there were \$12-13bn of loans in US warehouses before the market shutdown. If banks could place AAAs on static deals at an attractive rate (CLO tranches still pay based on 3m Libor), this would be beneficial as it allows them to convert most of these warehouses and potentially pave the way for a re-opening of the CLO market. However, the provision that eligible collateral in the CLO needs to be "newly issued" may make the inclusion of CLOs in TALF almost meaningless. Assuming "newly issued" refers to the same March 23 date as the rest of the facility, there would be virtually no collateral that fits the bill as the loan market is frozen and this in and of itself will not re-open the market. Perhaps banks could create balance sheet CLOs if they have existing commitments that they could fund as loans, but the current bridged book of leveraged loans is fairly modest and this type of securitization is unlikely to make sense for most banks.

Unlike ABS and CLOs, CMBS is the only asset class within the securitized products universe where legacy securities are eligible for the TALF program and new issues are not. Only conduit securities will be eligible and SASB/CRE CLOs will not be eligible. A-S tranches that are AAA rated should also be eligible for this facility and should compress versus A4-A5 tranches. While spreads have already tightened since the wides and are rallying again on the back of today's announcement, we think it is nonetheless a positive and also puts a cap on the downside. 10y AAA spreads had tightened to about 225bp over swap from 350bp at the wide, and are another 40-60bp tighter today. Even at a 180bp spread on a 10y bond, with a haircut of 20% and funding at 3y OIS+125bp rate, the levered yield is attractive at about 7%, which suggests there is room for further compression. In contrast, financing in the repo market is much more punitive at L+225-250bp. Importantly, we believe that this announcement materially reduces the downside for CMBS AAA spreads.

Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF)

Quick Facts: The Municipal Liquidity Facility will support lending to states, cities (population of 1mn and up), counties (population 2mn and up), or any instrumentalities thereof that issue on behalf of the State, City, or County for the purpose of managing its cash flows. Only one issuer per state, city, or county is eligible. The SPV will purchase eligible notes directly from issuers, and will be funded with an initial \$35bn equity investment from the Treasury, allowing it to buy up to \$500 billion of eligible notes. It will cease purchasing notes on September 30, 2020, unless it is extended. Eligible notes include: tax anticipation notes, tax and revenue anticipation notes, bond anticipation notes, and other similar short-term notes with maturities less than or equal to two years. The SPV may purchase these notes up to an aggregate amount of 20% of the issuer's general revenue from own sources. The Federal Reserve will continue to closely monitor conditions in the primary and secondary markets for municipal securities and will evaluate whether additional measures are needed to support the flow of credit and liquidity.

Views: This is a positive development as it relieves the primary pipeline pressure as some investors were very concerned about its effect on the secondary market. Municipalities will likely tap this program aggressively to address their liquidity needs, but longer-term the challenges are still quite pressing as we expect tax revenues of states and local municipalities to take a \$350bn or even larger hit. Additionally, some aspects of this facility need clarification, as it is not obvious at the moment which muni issuers aside from states, cities and counties will be able to tap it. Overall, it probably falls short of investor expectations, and as compared to the facilities implemented for corporates. Consequently, if needed, in our view the Fed may make an addition to this program later on.

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