

Analysis of Proposed Consent Order to Aid Public Comment
In the Matter of Billion Auto, Inc. File No. 112-3209.

The Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”) has accepted, subject to final approval, an agreement containing a consent order from Billion Auto, Inc. The proposed consent order has been placed on the public record for thirty (30) days for receipt of comments by interested persons. Comments received during this period will become part of the public record. After thirty (30) days, the FTC will again review the agreement and the comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the agreement and take appropriate action or make final the agreement’s proposed order.

The respondent is a motor vehicle dealer. The matter involves its advertising of the purchase, financing, and leasing of its motor vehicles. According to the FTC complaint, respondent has represented that when a consumer trades in a used vehicle in order to purchase another vehicle, respondent will pay off the balance of the loan on the trade-in vehicle such that the consumer will have no remaining obligation for any amount of that loan. The complaint alleges that in fact, when a consumer trades in a used vehicle with negative equity (*i.e.* the loan balance on the vehicle exceeds the vehicle’s value) in order to purchase another vehicle, respondent does not pay off the balance of the loan on the trade-in vehicle such that the consumer will have no remaining obligation for any amount of that loan. Instead, the respondent includes the amount of the negative equity in the loan for the newly purchased vehicle. The complaint alleges therefore that the representation is false or misleading in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act. In addition, the complaint alleges violations of the Truth in Lending Act (“TILA”) and Regulation Z for failing to disclose certain costs and terms when advertising credit. The complaint also alleges a violation of the Consumer Leasing Act (“CLA”) and Regulation M for failing to disclose the costs and terms of certain leases offered.

The proposed order is designed to prevent the respondent from engaging in similar deceptive practices in the future. Part I of the proposed order prohibits the respondent from misrepresenting that it will pay the remaining loan balance on a consumer’s trade-in vehicle such that the consumer will have no obligation for any amount of that loan. It also prohibits misrepresenting any other material fact relating to the financing or leasing of a motor vehicle.

Part II of the proposed order addresses the TILA allegations. It requires clear and conspicuous TILA/Regulation Z disclosures when advertising any of the relevant triggering terms with regard to issuing consumer credit. It also requires that if any finance charge is advertised, the rate be stated as an “annual percentage rate” using that term or the abbreviation “APR.” In addition, Part II prohibits any other violation of TILA or Regulation Z.

Part III of the proposed order addresses the CLA allegation. It requires that the respondent clearly and conspicuously make all of the disclosures required by CLA and Regulation M if it states relevant triggering terms, including the monthly lease payment. In addition, Part III prohibits any other violation of CLA and Regulation M.

Part IV of the proposed order requires respondent to keep copies of relevant

advertisements and materials substantiating claims made in the advertisements. Part V requires that respondent provide copies of the order to certain of its personnel. Part VI requires notification of the Commission regarding changes in corporate structure that might affect compliance obligations under the order. Part VII requires the respondent to file compliance reports with the Commission. Finally, Part VIII is a provision “sunsetting” the order after twenty (20) years, with certain exceptions.

The purpose of this analysis is to aid public comment on the proposed order. It is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the complaint or proposed order, or to modify in any way the proposed order’s terms.