Orbitel - Hidden Valley ABDG Narrative

Orbitel Communications is a broadband company based in Arizona spanning from the southern Phoenix metro area to the northern Tucson metro area. It provides high speed data, video, and phone services to the communities of Maricopa, Sun Lakes, SunBird, Robson Ranch, SaddleBrooke, and SaddleBrooke Ranch. Founded in 2004, the company currently has 407 miles of plant in its service areas (strand and trench footage). The operation employs approximately 30 team members with an average tenure of 7.6 years.

Orbitel is a part of the Schurz Communications, Inc. broadband group. Founded in 1872, SCI has a long history of dedication to its customers and communities. Family owned; Schurz is in its fifth generation of leadership. Though Orbitel is a local Arizona operator, it has the power of five other broadband systems with sister properties based in Maryland, Iowa, Minnesota, Vermont, and Ohio serving over 117,000 members across the country. Schurz also owns a cloud-based solutions and storage company.

Orbitel understands the broadband divide. When Orbitel was purchased by SCI in 2012, the highest Internet speed offered was 20Mbps with no Wi-Fi option. This was in stark contrast to other operators in that era. Today, Orbitel is building fiber-to-the-home in all new construction areas with 1G service and will roll out 1G, DOCSIS 3.1 service to all legacy areas. Plans to increase speeds will continue.

Hidden Valley is on the wrong side of the broadband divide today. No broadband provider operates in this community. One company, Century Link does have service in some of Hidden Valley offering DSL speeds only. The pandemic has forced more people to use broadband in a variety of ways that are now becoming mainstream. Remote activity includes but isn't limited to work, learning, telehealth and entertainment such as video, gaming, and other OTT type products. In addition, more devices and equipment can connect to the Internet of Things, from phones, alarms, cameras, refrigerators, and various products that improve overall life for the resident and their families. To truly be an effective household of today, fast Internet speeds with Wi-Fi capabilities are a must. Orbitel wants to bring future-proof technology to Hidden Valley, AZ.

Hidden Valley, AZ, an unincorporated area, is estimated by Pinal County to have almost 700 homes with 1,365 residents. In addition, a new HOA with 3,600 homes is planned with land being purchased in 2021 by Emmerson Holdings adding 9,000 new residents. Complimenting the residential area are several first responder stations, businesses, churches, and recreational facilities.

Orbitel will utilize approximately 20 miles of plant to provide service for the residents of hidden Valley. To avoid $300,000 of costs to cross canals, Orbitel will use aerial attachments for roughly eight and a half miles of fiber. Once Hidden Valley is reached, Orbitel will add over 12 miles of plant to connect residents and provide a 1G/1G network. The overall estimated cost of this project [redacted].

Thanks to the state of Arizona for providing assistance in bridging the technological divide. Orbitel is asking for Arizona Broadband Development Grant (Rural) funding of [redacted]. Orbitel will match [redacted]. The census tracks for this area AZ021001701 and AZ021001702.

Accompanying documents for the project costs, timeline, personnel, and information is attached. Please direct any questions to:

John D. Schurz
President & General Manager
Orbitel Communications
[redacted]