



# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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## Dems face no-win choice for spending plan

Near deadline, they must vote with the GOP or allow shutdown.

By Lisa Mascaro  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A day before a shutdown deadline, Senate Democrats are mounting a last-ditch protest over a Republican-led government funding bill that already passed the House but failed to slap

any limits on President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk's efforts to gut federal operations.

Senate Democrats are under intense pressure to do whatever they can to stop the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency, which is taking a wrecking ball to long-established government agencies and purging thousands of federal workers from jobs.

Trump himself offered to wade in Thursday to negotiate: "If they

need me, I'm there 100%."

But the president also began casting blame on Democrats for any potential disruptions, saying during an Oval Office meeting, "if it shuts down, it's not the Republicans' fault."

Democrats are pushing a stop-gap 30-day funding bill as an alternative. But its prospects are dim in the Congress controlled by Republicans. And it's unlikely

Shutdown continued on A6



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (left) and Senate Majority Leader John Thune lead their parties as funding deadline looms.

## Audit dispute is tied to MARTA delays



Mayor Andre Dickens told the MARTA board on Thursday that delays come at a cost: "Every day that we delay, projects continue to cost more." The project is now in its ninth month of delay. ARVIN TEMKAR/AJC

### Mayor stalled Five Points project for months, according to records.

By Sara Gregory  
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The decision to tie Five Points Station renovation permits to the completion of an audit into MARTA spending came directly from Mayor Andre Dickens, top city officials told transit authority staff, according to documents obtained by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Dickens said that isn't the case

during rare remarks to MARTA's Board of Directors on Thursday after the AJC's story was published online. But the records appear to back up an assertion made by MARTA officials last month that the city has intentionally stalled the permit approval process on a project that is now in its ninth month of delay, and where each additional day runs the risk of a

Five Points continued on A11



A construction notice is seen in Atlanta's Five Points Station in June. Mayor Andre Dickens denied holding up permits and said the city wants work to start. AJC FILE



Mayor Andre Dickens wants to pursue connecting the city streetcar to an infill station at Murphy Crossing instead of the previous plan. CHRISTINA MATA-COTTA FOR THE AJC

### Dickens no longer backs Beltline rail Eastside plan

After mayor's reversal, some say it may not even be needed.

By Zachary Hansen  
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Mayor Andre Dickens said Thursday he no longer wants the first phase of Beltline light rail to go alongside the Eastside Trail, backing off plans he supported during his campaign.

The surprise announcement was made at a meeting of MARTA's board of directors during a broad conversation about the mayor's vision for transit in the city.

Courtney English, the mayor's chief adviser, said Dickens now wants to pursue connecting the city's streetcar to a future infill station at Murphy Crossing rather than the longtime plan of starting along the bustling Eastside Trail.

"We are committed to building rail on the Beltline. However, not in the form that has been previously discussed," English told the MARTA board.

The change in plans came as a surprise to many city leaders, including Atlanta City Council President Doug Shipman. He told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution the mayor's Beltline announcement was "news to me today," declining to comment further. A MARTA spokesperson said the board sim-

Beltline rail continued on A11

## Defendant in tent slashing accused of prior harassing

Warrants cite incidents at Old Wheat Street homeless encampment.

By Matt Reynolds  
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The man accused of slashing tents at a homeless encampment last week appeared to be carrying a firearm and had been threatening and harassing people for two weeks before the incident, according to court records.

The warrants were signed March 8 against 42-year-old Daniel Barnett, who also goes by the name Davinci Barcelo. The warrants include misdemeanor counts of criminal trespass/property damage and reckless conduct for



Daniel Barnett

allegedly endangering people at the homeless encampment on Old Wheat Street. The encampment in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood is the same one where

Cornelius Taylor died in January during a camp clearing operation by city workers.

A man named Rodney Johnson was inside one of the tents when Barnett slashed through the outer and inner layers, according to the documents.

Atlanta Police Department

Barnett continued on A6

## 'Significant' tornado a possibility this weekend in metro Atlanta



Unfortunately, metro Atlanta has seen its share of bad weather this winter, as evidenced by this tree blocking Ormewood Avenue earlier this month after a storm. BEN HENDREN FOR THE AJC

By Rosana Hughes  
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Beware, metro Atlanta: A "significant" EF2 or higher tornado could spin up with this weekend's storms, and weather experts are urging residents to prepare now.

A large portion of Georgia's north and western half, including the state's southwest corner, is under a Level 3 (of 5) risk for severe weather Saturday and Sunday, the National Weather Service warns.

The exact timing of the storm's arrival from the west still is being fine-tuned. But forecasters are fairly certain that Saturday eve-

Weather continued on A6

### Medicaid recipients need to brace themselves

GOP-led movement in the state Legislature could mean some 2 million people in Georgia have their benefits cut.



### Hey, get ready: It's almost time to get your green on

The best places to spend St. Patrick's Day in Atlanta? Here's all the information you'll need to have a good time.

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